

U.N. report criticises Iran over human rights

GENEVA (Agencies) — The United Nations has expressed concern over the human rights situation in Iran, criticising Tehran for subjecting prisoners to torture and warning that public executions were on the rise.

The report by a special U.N. representative, Reynaldo Galindo Pohl, accused Iran's government of inflicting sentences incompatible with international norms, including amputation and flagellation. It said there had been an increase in the number of public executions and deaths by stoning.

Mr. Galindo Pohl, who based his report on accounts by witnesses and the press because he has not been allowed into Iran, denounced the killing of three Protestant pastors and called for a halt to the persecution of members of the Bahai faith.

He expressed concern over ill-treatment of prisoners, noting the death in detention of the writer Ali Akbar Saidi-Sirjani last November and reports that Abbas Amir-Entezam, a former deputy prime minister held in Evin prison, was being mistreated.

Mr. Galindo Pohl cited the case of Helmut Szymkus, a German engineer who has complained of being tortured during his five years in detention in Evin prison on espionage charges. He also cited the disappearance from Esfahan of an Australian citizen, David Andrew Lindner.

His report was moderate in tone, however, and noted that Iran had recognised the universal character of human rights in a statement to a U.N. body last August.

In his report, Mr. Galindo

Pohl said 63 executions were reported in the press last year, many allegedly for violent crimes. The vast majority of executions went undocumented after international criticism of the high number of cases, he said.

He criticised authorities for extending the death penalty to include price speculation and racketeering.

The Salvadorean jurist voiced particular concern at the incidence of whippings and amputations and the increase in the number of public hangings and deaths by stoning.

Torture was still widely used to extract confessions, especially in politically sensitive cases, Mr. Galindo Pohl said.

The 29-page report will be considered by the 53-nation U.N. Human Rights Commission later this month in a procedure reserved serious violations.

Mr. Galindo Pohl said there were signs of gross prison overcrowding. One former convict described how prison units for 150 people contained 700 to 1,000, with many forced to sleep in the toilets. Hygiene was appalling and disease was rife, with practically no medical treatment.

The government maintains the prison population is 100,000, half of them sentenced for drug-related crimes.

Mr. Galindo Pohl said the 73-year-old former chief of military police, Azizollah Amir-Rahimi, had been arrested last November after writing an open letter to President Hashemi Rafsanjani to press for more democratic reforms.

"No writer would be able to describe the endurance of political prisoners in Iran nor the flagrant abuses by the revolutionary tribunals against the dignity and honour of the people, nor the suffering of the Iranian population as a result of systematic oppression," wrote Mr. Amir-Rahimi in his letter.

Mr. Amir-Rahimi's son was taken into custody after appealing against the arrest. Iranian media reported that Mr. Amir-Rahimi was transferred to hospital because of opium addiction and was subsequently receiving psychiatric treatment, said Mr. Galindo Pohl.

In an effort to uphold Iranian cultural and religious traditions, authorities had outlawed clothes with "improper" designs or Roman lettering, and all satellite television equipment.

Persecution against religious minorities like the Baha'is continued unabated, said Mr. Galindo Pohl. He indicated that authorities were implicated in last year's murder of three prominent Protestant church leaders and said the case against the official suspect was riddled with inconsistencies.

The jurist said the government should allow the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to visit prisoners under a 1991 accord. Iranian authorities kicked out the ICRC shortly after the agreement was implemented, apparently fearing that the humanitarian agency had given information on prison conditions to Mr. Galindo Pohl.



UNUSUAL CALM: Two Afghan children sell area was a hotly contested frontline in the bread locally along the ruins of a former recent battles between factions (AFP photo) shopping boulevard in eastern Kabul. This

Iran, Israel in secret talks on airman — paper

BONN (R) — Iran and Israel have been holding secret talks in Germany for years on the release of a captured airman and are nearing a conclusion, the German daily Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ) reported.

In an advance release from Tuesday's edition, the FAZ quoted Bonn security forces saying the talks on the fate of navigator Ron Arad had been going on since 1986, immediately after he was shot down over South Lebanon and captured by militiamen.

According to the paper the sources said the talks had "entered the decisive stage."

Israel Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's spokesman Oded Ben-Ami told Reuters: "We have no information on this. I don't know anything about this."

"We are willing to say that we are sparing no effort to bring Ron Arad home but we have no information about new developments."

The newspaper also quoted Iran's Ambassador Hossein Mousavi denying any secret talks had taken place. Israel has repeatedly demanded notably of its missing soldiers, notably Arad, before it agreed to discuss an exchange of about 250 Arab captives held by it or its military allies, the South Lebanon Army (SLA).

The Pro-Iranian Hizbollah (Party of God) militia opposing Israel in the region denies knowledge of Arad's fate.

"Hizbollah has no relation whatsoever with the case of Ron Arad," a Hizbollah spokesman in Beirut said.

Last May Israeli commandos snatched Mustapha Al Dirani, leader of an anti-Israeli guerrilla group allied with Hizbollah from his home in western Lebanon.

Israel said it hoped Sheikh Dirani, head of a guerrilla unit that captured Arad after his plane was shot down, would give them information on his whereabouts.

Israel is also holding Hizbollah cleric Sheikh Abdul Karim Obeid, kidnapped from South Lebanon by Israeli commandos in 1989, and Sheikh Ahmad Yassin, spiritual leader of the Palestinian group Hamas.

The FAZ said Iran was demanding as its price for Arad the release of Sheikh Dirani, Sheikh Obeid and Sheikh Yassin as well as military concessions.

It said this was believed to mean the end of Israeli control over the "security zone" it has declared in South Lebanon, a region used by Hizbollah fighters to launch attacks on Israel.

The newspaper said Iran was also demanding that Israel sign the international nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Israel, on the other hand, was demanding that Iran end its support of Hamas and Hizbollah, the FAZ said.

Emir calls on press to stop staining Kuwait's reputation

KUWAIT (AP) — Kuwait's emir on Monday called on the country's press to stop sowing the seeds of social unrest and staining the emirate's reputation abroad.

In an annual address to the nation marking the last 10 days of the Holy Month of Ramadan, Sheikh Jaber Al Ahmad Al Sabah said: "The attacks and counter attacks we have unfortunately been witnessing are caused by personal reasons and have nothing to do with public interest."

He said such attacks can only benefit Kuwait's enemies who are "hunting for our mistakes." He did not name these enemies.

The emirate boasts the freest press among the six Arab Gulf states.

Government censorship imposed on the press when parliament was dissolved in 1986, was lifted before the 1992 public elections that restored the legislature with an opposition majority.

A war of words over human rights has been taking place among columnists of Al Qabas, the only independent daily, and those of the pro-government papers.

It was started with the deportation of a Palestinian poet who allegedly insulted a Kuwaiti columnist in a poem. Islamic fundamentalists who want Kuwait to implement Islamic law and the Westernised liberals also clash, sometimes bitterly.

"We wish that our press... would purify its shiny picture from these impurities that shake our social ties and stain our image in front of the world," the emir said.

He called on solidarity among Kuwaitis who are still recovering from the effects of the Iraqi occupation that was ended four years ago by a U.S.-led international coalition.

"We have to remember that love cannot be created with a decision... and moral values are not ordered by decree," the emir said.

He told Kuwaitis that their pre-oil forefathers had more "patriotic feelings than those who nowadays are only concerned with taking and possessing."

Kuwaitis, who have been pampered for decades with a cradle-to-grave welfare system might have to pay taxes and fees for services they have been receiving free of charge.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Rabin's party blocks Golan referendum law

TEL AVIV (AFP) — The ruling Labour Party on Tuesday banned three of its hardline members from introducing a bill which would call for a 65-per cent majority in a referendum over concessions to Syria on the Golan Heights. The parliamentary group, at the request of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, blocked the proposed bill by a 28-5 vote, sources in parliament said. The three deputies, led by Avidor Kahalani, planned to submit a bill which would have called for a 65-per cent majority in a referendum on any Golan concession or the support of 70 members in the 120-seat parliament. "If we accepted such a proposal we would have needed the support of a part of the opposition," said Mr. Rabin. Foreign Minister Shimon Peres said such a law would have signalled that "we don't want to reach an accord with Syria."

Gad Al Haq says he will not visit Israel

CAIRO (R) — A senior Egyptian Muslim cleric said he would not visit Israel because it was a bad, untrustworthy neighbour, newspapers reported on Tuesday. "If we are asked to be good neighbours then those who ask us must be good neighbours. But Israel is not," said Sheikh Gad Al Haq Al Gad Al Haq, sheikh of Al Azhar, Egypt's prestigious institute of Islamic learning. Another senior Egyptian religious official, Mufti Mohammad Sayyid Tantawi, said in January he was willing to visit Israel because Muslims could not achieve their rights by boycotting the Jewish state. Sheikh Gad Al Haq, whose remarks at a Koran recital competition on Monday were reported by newspapers, said: "If Israel has not been deterred by the crushing defeat it received in the October (1973) war with Egypt then no Muslim, including Sheikh Al Azhar, would want to visit it at all. (No Muslim) would want to fulfill any of (Israel's) requests as long as it continues to ignore contracts and promises and is not a good neighbour."

Syrians elect local councils

DAMASCUS (AP) — Syrians went to the polls Tuesday to elect local administration councils for the country's 14 governorates. According to official statistics, 22,196 candidates were competing for 5,452 council seats. Local councils provide social, educational and cultural services for citizens. They are elected for four-year terms. The election process will continue through Wednesday, supervised by polling committees headed by city mayors.

Russian spy chief visits Turkey

MOSCOW (AFP) — Russia's counter-intelligence head, Sergei Stepashin, left here Tuesday for a visit to Turkey focusing on Chechnya, and fighting terrorism, drug trafficking and organised crime, the news agency Interfax said. Mr. Stepashin, director of the Federal counter-intelligence service FSK, formerly the KGB, was scheduled to meet with his counterparts in Turkey's special services, Interfax said. Turkey's attitude to the Chechnya conflict has been ambiguous. Turkish Interior Minister Nihat Metense, during a visit here in January to look at Russian military hardware, stressed that it was an internal Russian problem. But earlier in January, the Turkish parliament condemned Russian "atrocities" in Chechnya and said the crisis there could spark further instability in the already jittery Caucasus region.

Israel links fishing ban to 'harassment'

BEIRUT (AFP) — Israel has linked a ban on overnight fishing in South Lebanese territorial waters to the alleged harassment of people going in and out of its "security zone" in South Lebanon, officials said on Tuesday. Israel sent a note to the Lebanese army saying the ban will be maintained as long as the army "harassed" travellers entering and leaving the occupied border strip, the official said. Lebanese Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri rejected the Israeli conditions and denounced the message as a new threat from the Jewish state. "Are they asking us to put an end in the (security) measures taken by the Lebanese army in a bid to send us car-bombs?" Mr. Berri told reporters after the army informed him of the Israeli note. "It is our right to take any measure we consider necessary to maintain peace and order in our country," he said.

Libya asks for Indonesian help

JAKARTA (AFP) — Libya has called on Indonesia, a recently appointed member of the U.N. Security Council, to help seek a review of international sanctions imposed upon Tripoli after the 1988 bombing of a U.S. airliner. Visiting Libyan Foreign Minister Omar Mustafa Al Mumtaz told journalists Tuesday that he had asked Indonesia to support a review of the sanctions, saying fresh evidence raised doubts about Libyan involvement in the Lockerbie bombing. He said the Security Council should "review the whole issue versus Libya and all the sanctions should be abolished until a thorough investigation has been carried out to find out the truth."

PNA holds six Abu Nidal members

GAZA (R) — Palestinian police are holding six members of the Abu Nidal group in Gaza on suspicion of "planning to destabilise" the self-rule areas, the Palestinian legal adviser said on Tuesday. "Six people from the Abu Nidal group... are being questioned. This group had many plans to undermine Palestinian national security," said Khaled Al Kidra, the Palestinian attorney general in Gaza. A Gaza family said three of its members were among the six Palestinians detained last October on suspicion of belonging to the Abu Nidal group. Members of the Abdo family denied that their relatives were activists in any guerrilla group. A senior aide to Yasser Arafat said in a newspaper interview published on Monday that a member of Abu Nidal's Fatah Revolutionary Council was in custody on suspicion of plotting to assassinate Mr. Arafat.

Lonely lioness hit by U.N. sanctions

BAGHDAD (AFP) — The beasts in Baghdad zoo have become the latest casualties of the U.N. embargo imposed in August 1990, as staff struggle to find food slaughtering donkeys to keep the endangered animals alive.

Hani, a lion from Zambia was the latest inmate to die after falling sick through lack of food.

Now keeper Salman Daoud fears the once-proud beast's mate Sukkar could be next.

For nearly 25 years he has cared for the animals at the zoo, built on a former military site in Al Zaura, and

opened in 1973.

At the time the zoo was for nothing, and building on a second phase was due to start. In 1990 at a cost then of about \$30 million.

But it was never carried out because of the embargo slapped on Iraq in August 1990 when it invaded neighbouring Iraq.

Now food is rationed and medicines are in short supply. Only 42 animals are left in the zoo including tigers, bears, monkeys, lamas, wolves, jackals, camels, horses and several species of birds.

"Damn the blockade and those who ordered it," said Mr. Daoud as he stroked Sugar tenderly, stretching his hand through the bars.

"We need 60 kilograms of red meat just to feed the lioness, the wolves and the tigers," zoo manager Adel Salman Musa told the Alif Baa weekly.

"Because of the rising cost of meat, we have to kill a donkey daily at a cost of 10,000 dinars," or \$15.5, three times the average salary in Baghdad, he explained.

Staff dose sick animals with human medicines given in greater quantity in the hope they will work, lacking proper animal treatments.

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Many Afghans see new militia as saviour

KABUL (AP) — Only months after emerging as a new force in Afghanistan, warriors fighting for a purified Islamic state are being seen as saviours by many low-suffering people fed up with civil war.

A rapid advance that began with their capture of the southern city of Kandahar last November has brought the Taliban militia to the southern outskirts of the capital Kabul.

Little is known about the Taliban, militant Islamic students recognisable by their distinctive black turbans. But many Afghans believe they are the only group that can end the three-year-old civil war, making the Taliban a "wild card in peace efforts."

"Many people believe the Taliban can save the country," said Mohammad Taher, who works as a moneychanger. "They have brought peace to a number of provinces. They have ended

roadblocks by the other parties. This has opened the roads and allowed more food into the capital, so goods are cheaper."

Afghans have grown disgusted with the established Islamic factions who have devastated Kabul in a bitter struggle for power that began after they ousted a communist government in 1992.

The Taliban call the other factions power-hungry, corrupt and even un-Islamic.

"There is shelling, robbing and looting. This is not an Islamic government, this is not in the Koran," said Mullah Bor Jan, the Taliban's front-line commander in Charasayab, 25 kilometres south of Kabul.

On Saturday, U.N. envoy Mahmoud Mestiri visited Charasayab to court Taliban leaders.

He also met government representatives in an effort to preserve a peace plan that calls for embattled President

Burhanuddin Rabbani to step down and make way for a broad-based, multi-party governing council.

Mr. Mestiri wants the transition to take place within days, possible as soon as Monday.

But the Taliban have refused to sign up, saying the council must consist of "good Muslims" — a requirement the other groups often used to justify their continued fighting.

Many believe the well-armed Taliban could make or break the council.

The Taliban have recruited thousands of supporters among young Afghans who grew up in refugee camps in Pakistan and attended religious schools. Pakistan is believed to be supporting the group, though it denies that.

Mohammad Hussein, 21, is a typical Taliban warrior. He spent seven years at a religious school in the Pakistani city of Peshawar before he and 25 of his schoolmates joined the Taliban four months ago.

"The main thing we want in Afghanistan is a proper Islamic government with Sharia law," said Mr. Hussein. "The other parties have not done this."

The other factions say they share the same goal. But three years of fighting and anarchy that has reigned in and around Kabul has undermined their credibility.

The Taliban's message of social order has a powerful appeal. They claim to have halted lawlessness in areas they have captured in southern and eastern Afghanistan.

They have stopped warlords from imposing roadblocks and extorting money from civilians; they claim to have disarmed gangs that terrorised towns and villages and say they have cracked down on drug traffickers.

They also have begun to impose strictly traditional Islam. For example, all women are to wear veils and not permitted to work outside the home.

Many Taliban fighters are teenagers or in their early 20s, though many commanders are veterans of the war against the Soviet forces and communist Afghan allies that began in 1979.

Most frontline Taliban fighters wear either a black or white turban and the baggy pajama like clothes.

The Taliban came largely from the rural south of Afghanistan and most have never set foot in Kabul.

While the residents of the capital are desperate for peace, friction may arise between the rough and rugged Taliban and the more sophisticated population in Kabul.

"The people of Kabul are Muslims, but they are not used to having too many restrictions," said Mr. Taher, the money changer.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel: 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

17:00 "Les Raisons d'Avenir"
17:30 Envoye Special "Magazine"
19:00 News in French
19:15 E-Mag
19:30 Ramadan in the World
19:45 Charlie Chaplin
20:00 Get to Know Your Body
20:15 Law and Order
21:10 The Dwelling Place
22:00 News in English
22:30 Snowy River
23:15

PRAYER TIMES

04:51 Fajr
06:08 Sunrise
11:09 Dhuhr
15:01 Asr
17:31 Maghrib
18:48 Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Switzerland, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church, Tel. 632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440

De la Salle Church Tel. 661757

Terrace Church Tel. 623366

Church of the Annunciation Tel. 623541

Anglican Church Tel. 630851, Tel. 628543

Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331

Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261

St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751

Armenian International Church Tel. 652526

Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 624328

German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 684195

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932

Church of Nazareth Tel. 675691

The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 311295

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.

Temperatures will drop with a chance of thunder showers. Skies will be cloudy and winds southerly active and seas rough.

Min/Max temp.

Amman 5/10

Aqaba 10/19

Deserts 4/12

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

Jordan Valley 11/18

Yesterday's high temperatures:

Amman 15 Aqaba 22 Humidity

readings: Amman 37 per cent, Aqaba 44 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Khalil Ismaeq 714451
Dr. Jum' Abu Dhiyab 758848
Dr. Youssef Abdo 694916
Dr. Mohammad Al Ghoul 790730
First pharmacy 661912
Ferdows pharmacy 778336
Al Asena pharmacy 637055
Nairoukh pharmacy 623672
Al Salaa pharmacy 636730
Yaacoub pharmacy 649495
Shimoon pharmacy 637660
Nairoukh pharmacy 623672
Najib pharmacy 847632

IRBID:
Dr. Ahmad Qanu (—)
Al Quds pharmacy (—)

ZARQA:
Dr. Fawaz Harzallah 903644
Khalifeh pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111
Civil Defence Department 661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 630341
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police 192 621111 637777
Fire Brigade 617101
Blood Bank 775121
Highway Police 843402
Traffic Police 896540
Public Security Department 63021
Hotel Complaints 605800
Price Complaints 661176
Water and Sewerage 897467
Amman Municipality 787111
Complaints 617101
Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 010230
Central Amman Telephone Repair 623101
Abd

Mexico alleges U.S. human rights violations

Mexican rights group says prisoners show signs of torture

MEXICO CITY (Agencies) — A government human rights inspector says four of seven people arrested two weeks ago for alleged ties with Indian rebels showed signs of having been tortured.

All seven said they were forced to sign confessions after they were arrested and were not allowed to read what they had allegedly confessed.

The allegations were contained in a 39-page report, released late Monday, on 24 complaints the government's human rights commission received following President Ernesto Zedillo's Feb. 9 crackdown on the rebel Zapatista National Liberation Army.

Jorge Madrazo Cuellar, president of the commission, read the report to journalists and officials in Mexico City. He also condemned ranchers and landowners for harassing Roman Catholic Bishop Samuel Ruiz over the weekend in the southern state of Chiapas.

The ranchers and landowners accuse the bishop of complicity with the rebels, who rose up in Chiapas last year to demand better living conditions for Indian peasants and clean elections.

More than 30 people were arrested in the crackdown on the rebels and the government claims it has found rebel safe houses and weapons caches in Chiapas, and two

other states.

Five men and two women were arrested in the Veracruz town of Yanga on Feb. 9. The report said commission investigators and doctors certified that four of the men showed definite signs of torture.

It said other complaints made to the commission are under investigation.

The Zapatista rebellion began Jan. 1, 1994, and at least 145 people died in fighting until a ceasefire was declared 12 days later.

The Mexican army has moved into rebel zones, and the insurgents have fled into the jungle along with thousands of sympathisers from area villages.

Peace efforts in southern Mexico have suffered a setback with both the government and Maya Indian rebels refusing to drop their rival claims over a huge swathe of jungle territory.

The army has seized dozens of towns and villages in a virtually bloodless 11-day drive deep into rebel-held areas and has no intention of giving up its gains, hoping to push rebel leaders into negotiations from a position of weakness.

But the Zapatista National Liberation Army says it will not sit down for talks until the government pulls back its troops and allows thousands of pro-rebel refugees to return to their villages in the



Mexican army soldiers stationed in the village of La Garrucha in the state of Chiapas in Mexico play a friendly game of soccer. The troops advanced to the village which is in an area formerly controlled by the Zapatista National Liberation Army (AFP photo)

U.S. House Republicans set fast pace; but steepest hurdles yet to come

WASHINGTON (AP) — House Republicans have abandoned Congress' leisurely pace as they rush to deliver on their "Contract With America." But nearly halfway to their 100-day deadline, much more than half the job remains undone.

And the stickiest issues are yet to come.

From a balanced budget amendment to tax cuts, from slashing regulations to re-vamping welfare, every item in the contract is well-tested and highly popular with the public.

Still, lawmakers are discovering as they race from item to item that some proposals need improvement, some are divisive and some could hit a brick wall in the Senate or encounter a presidential veto.

"It's a little bit like a multi-course dinner in which the first couple of courses are bland and acceptable to everybody. As it goes on, the dishes get more exotic and harder to digest," said Rutgers University political scientist Ross Baker.

The contract, a campaign document that hundreds of republican House candidates signed and ran on last fall, pledged votes on 10 legislative packages in the first 100 days of the 104th Congress if Republicans won control of the House of Representatives.

"We've got some tough stuff ahead of us," House majority leader Dick Armey of Texas, said in an interview. But, with an optimism not universally shared, he predicted 80 per cent of the "contract" would pass the House and 50 per cent of it eventually would become law.

Wednesday marks the midpoint of what so far has been a highly productive opening run marked by iron party discipline and virtually no distractions.

Republican setbacks can be counted on the fingers of one hand. Most notably, Republicans tried and failed to revive a missile defence system. They also tried to make it constitutionally impossible to raise income-tax rates without a three-fifths majority vote, but didn't have the votes.

House Speaker Newt Gingrich of Georgia has called the Republicans' success rate "pretty astonishing."

So far the Republicans have fulfilled opening-day commitments to reform internal house affairs and apply all federal laws to Congress, and the House has passed three complete sections of the campaign-season contract.

A balanced budget amendment to the constitution and line-item veto authority for the president granting him the right to veto specific spending measures in a bill. Senate approval of the budget amendment is uncertain at this point. Even if it passes, 38 state legislatures must then ratify it.

A stiff crime bill that replaces crime prevention and police hiring programs enacted last year with \$10 billion in block grants to states and countries. Senate prospects are precarious, and President Bill Clinton is threatening a veto.

A national security bill that reduces U.S. support for U.S. peacekeeping and restricts the president's authority to place U.S. troops under foreign commanders. The Clinton administration says the House bill is an unacceptable infringement upon executive powers; Senate prospects are uncertain.

Still to come, in order of appearance:

Regulatory reform. The House this week takes up a moratorium on most government regulations and a requirement to weigh costs when evaluating the benefit

Blur sweeps Brits with four awards

LONDON (AP) — The pop band Blur won four Brit Music Awards including top British artist of the year. The first band to take four prizes in the Pop Music Awards, Blur also won Best Album for Parklife, Best Video and Best Single. Madonna headed the line-up for the presentation show at London's Alexandra Palace.

The awards, sponsored by Britannia Music are voted by an academy of 500 people, largely from the record industry. Elton John received a lifetime achievement award for his contribution to the music industry. Paul Weller, former leader of the Jam and the Style Council, was named best British solo artist, narrowly beating Eric Clapton, Seal, Morrissey and Elton Costello. Best British female solo artist was Eddi Reader, formerly lead singer with Fairground Attraction. Best British dance act was M People and best British new-comer was Oasis. The film soundtrack prize was won by Oscar-nominated Pulp Fiction, beating The Lion King, Four Weddings And A Funeral, Forrest Gump and Philadelphia. Nellee Hooper, won best British producer for work with Madonna, among many other stars. Tony Morimer, star of East 17, performed with his band from a wheelchair after falling off the stage during rehearsals.



The city of Grozny lies in almost months of bombardment by Russian tanks made a breakthrough

Paper: Why

MOSCOW (Agencies) — Lawmakers, journalists and even Harvard students have had little trouble contacting Chechen President Dzhokhar Dudayev, but Russian soldiers and sleuths cannot seem to find Russia's public enemy No. 1.

The daily newspaper Izvestia Tuesday questioned the "effectiveness and professionalism" of the Interior Ministry and the Federal Counterintelligence Service, suggesting they don't really want to capture Mr. Dudayev.

Russia declared the rebellious leader of the breakaway Republic of Chechnya a "wanted criminal" in January, but efforts to apprehend him have been little more than empty intimidations, the newspaper said.

"The Russian investigators mysteriously begin to wink their eyes and flap their tongues, hinting that the days of the Chechen leader are numbered, he's surrounded, his movements are controlled," Izvestia said. Yet Mr. Dudayev continues to elude them.

Mr. Dudayev recently met with Russian businessman Konstantin Borovoi and gives frequent interviews to Russian and foreign journalists in the Chechen capital, Grozny, and elsewhere. In one recent radio interview, he answered questions posed by students and professors from Harvard University.

Sihanouk criticises government

BAYON TEMPLE, Cambodia (Agencies) — Cambodia's King Norodom Sihanouk reiterated Tuesday he has no desire for executive power despite a dislike for the Phnom Penh government led by his son, Prince Norodom Ranariddh.

"I do not admire very much this current regime, but I accept it," he told a crowd of about 200 people including government officials and Western ambassadors.

Among those who heard his remarks were First Prime Minister Ranariddh who was seated behind his father, U.S. Ambassador Charles Twining and Japanese Ambassador Yukio Imagawa.

King Sihanouk did not elaborate but firmly ruled out any desire to return to mainstream politics.

"I cannot and I will not be willing... to take power," he said. "It would be detrimental to the trend of the present government."

"So, no way for Sihanouk to take power. Even if, according to my Chinese doctor, I'm still strong. I'm not going to play such a game which is more dangerous than the present government."

King Sihanouk's speech was given in the shade of the 12th century Bayon Temple, home to King Sihanouk's forebears who once ruled a mighty empire from their base here.

He said he would not launch a constitutional coup against the current government, appointed to power following U.N.-organised elections in May 1993.

Referring to a letter from Hun Sen expressing concern

Oldest person still mischievous at 120

ARLES, France (R) — She was born in the year Bizet's Carmen was first staged and Tokyo published Anna Karenina, and a year before Alexander Graham Bell invented the telephone.

Frenchwoman Jeanne Calment, the oldest person in the world, celebrated her 120th birthday Tuesday, still going strong with a wit and mischievous smile which she calls the key to her longevity.

Blind, almost deaf and confined to a wheelchair, she chose a black crepe dress for the occasion, remarking: "This is good stuff, it'll last a long time."

Calment lunched on crab, duck and champagne with friends at her retirement home in Arles, in the south of France, before sharing a mammoth chocolate birthday cake with 80 guests, including France's health minister.

EU ministers seek animal transit compromise

BRUSSELS (Agencies) — EU farm ministers Tuesday held a second day of negotiations in an effort to break the Union's 18-month deadlock on maximum journey times for livestock.

The EU's French presidency, which has indicated that it will not schedule any further discussions of the issue during its six-month term in the EU chair if there is not a breakthrough at this meeting, tabled a complex compromise package in an effort to bridge the north-south divide that has produced the stand-off.

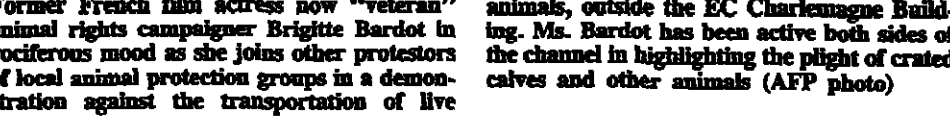
The northern EU states, under pressure from animal welfare campaigners, have been campaigning for limits of between eight and 15 hours on the maximum time animals can be transported across Europe and for strict controls to be imposed on hauliers covering issues such as the amount of space each animal has in lorries and the regularity of feeding and watering intervals.

But the southern states, particularly Italy and Greece, have resisted any limits, arguing that the northern, meat-exporting, countries have an economic interest in encouraging the slaughter of animals in their slaughterhouses rather than have them transported to the south.

The French compromise was based on applying different standards to different categories of animals.

The toughest standard would be applied to veal calves, lambs and kids for whom a 15 hour maximum journey time would apply with a two-hour stop becoming mandatory after the first eight hours.

For cows, sheep and goats a maximum of 24 hours is envisaged with two hours rest periods obligatory each eight hours. As for the younger



Former French film actress now "veteran" animal rights campaigner Brigitte Bardot in vociferous mood as she joins other protesters of local animal protection groups in a demonstration against the transportation of live

Burmese rebels

MAE SOT, Thailand (AP) — One of the world's longest-running insurgencies abandoned its last major stronghold Tuesday after intense shelling and gassing by Burmese troops, rebel and Thai sources said.

The Burmese rained a barrage of artillery on the Karen rebel base of Kawmoora from midnight until 3 a.m., forcing 1,400 rebels to abandon the base before dawn, said Thai Colonel Direk Yamnamreap.

Karen rebels said in interviews they did not have enough weapons and ammunition to defend the base from the attack by thousands of Burmese soldiers.

They said the Burmese troops fired an undetermined type of gas into the base, which some said made the rebels unconscious and others said stopped their breathing and made their eyes tearful.

A Bangkok-based support group for the Burmese opposition, Burma Issues, said in a statement that the "poison shells," interspersed with regular artillery, caused disorientation and unconsciousness. The group said an unknown number of rebels

Trouble is bre

LONDON (R) — The future of a world treaty aimed at preventing the spread of nuclear weapons, one of the major concerns of the post-cold war era, may now be in question because of disputes over whether and how to extend the pact.

The non-proliferation treaty (NPT) came into force in 1970 for a duration of 25 years and is up for renewal at a U.N. conference in New York which starts in April.

Covering more than 170 countries, it effectively sanctions five official nuclear powers — the United States, Russia, China, France and Britain — while committing other signatories to renounce nuclear weapons.

The major powers point to cases of nuclear smuggling following the collapse of the



Thailand tests second AIDS vaccine

BANGKOK (AFP) — Thailand began tests of a second AIDS vaccine Tuesday, injecting intravenous drug users who tested HIV-negative with the synthetic vaccine. Twenty volunteers were to be given the experimental vaccine and 10 others were to receive a water-and-glucose placebo in the trial, conducted by Mahidol University and the Public Health Ministry, with World Health Organisation support. The volunteers were recruited from Bangkok drug rehabilitation clinics. A first round of AIDS vaccine trials last year on volunteers who were not drug users showed that 10 out of 24 people partici-

ating had produced antibodies against the Human Immune-deficiency Virus (HIV). Thailand's National Commission on AIDS estimates that as many as 700,000 people are HIV-positive or suffer from full-blown Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). Some 4,500 Thais have died of AIDS. The photograph shows Dr. Thawip Kittiyaporn (right) of Bangkok's Mahidol University injects the experimental HIV/AIDS vaccine into the arm of an unidentified intravenous drug user as part of a second-round trial of a U.S.-made vaccine to combat AIDS (AFP photo).

World News

JORDAN TIMES, WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 1995 5

Blur sweeps Brits with four awards

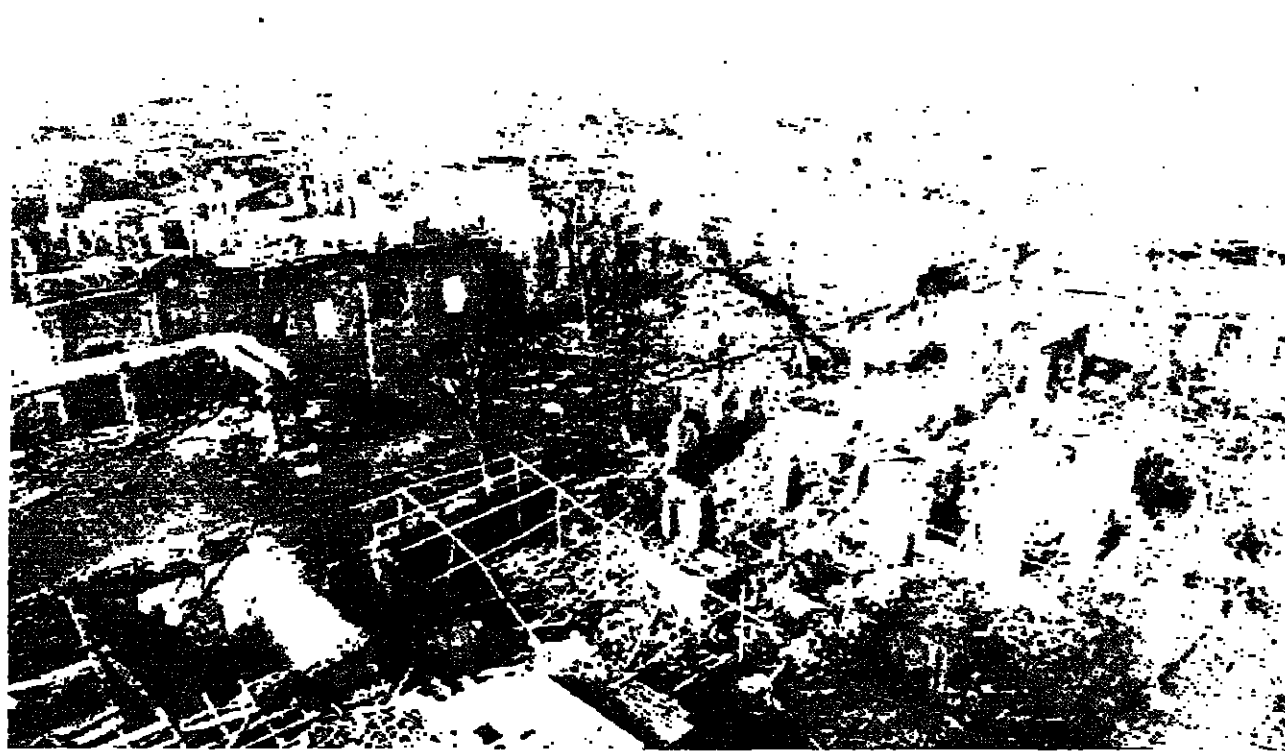
LONDON (AP) — The band Blur won four British Music Awards on Tuesday. The first band to take prizes in the Pop Music Awards, Blur also won Video and Best Single. The awards, sponsored by the British Music Industry, were presented at a ceremony in London's Alexandra Palace. The awards, sponsored by the British Music Industry, were presented at a ceremony in London's Alexandra Palace. The awards, sponsored by the British Music Industry, were presented at a ceremony in London's Alexandra Palace.

Nonja the artistic orangutan

VIENNA (AP) — Known as Nonja, a charming orangutan who has had four children, she is the star of a new television series. Her talent for painting and her ability to use tools have made her a sensation. She is the star of a new television series. Her talent for painting and her ability to use tools have made her a sensation. She is the star of a new television series. Her talent for painting and her ability to use tools have made her a sensation.

Thai police nab man who spoke with many voices

BANGKOK (R) — Police on Monday arrested a man who spoke with multiple voices. The man, who was found in a state of extreme distress, was taken to a hospital. He was found in a state of extreme distress. He was taken to a hospital. He was found in a state of extreme distress. He was taken to a hospital.



The city of Grozny lies in almost total ruin following two months of bombardment by Russian forces. A dozen Russian tanks made a breakthrough south of Grozny in a bid to surround the last rebel Chechen positions in the capital (AFP photo)

Paper: Why can't Russians find Dudayev?

MOSCOW (Agencies) — Lawmakers, journalists and even Harvard students have had little trouble contacting Chechen President Dzhokhar Dudayev, but Russian soldiers and snipers cannot seem to find Russia's public enemy No. 1.

The daily newspaper Izvestia Tuesday questioned the "effectiveness and professionalism" of the Interior Ministry and the Federal Counterintelligence Service, suggesting they don't really want to capture Mr. Dudayev.

Russia declared the rebellious leader of the breakaway Republic of Chechnya a "wanted criminal" in January, but efforts to apprehend him have been little more than empty intimidations, the newspaper said.

"(The Russian investigators) mysteriously begin to wink their eyes and flap their tongues, hinting that the days of the Chechen leader are numbered, he's surrounded, his movements are controlled," Izvestia said. Yet Mr. Dudayev continues to elude them.

Mr. Dudayev recently met with Russian businessman Konstantin Borovt and gives frequent interviews to Russian and foreign journalists in the Chechen capital, Grozny, and elsewhere. In one recent radio interview, he answered questions posed by students and professors from Harvard University.

In addition, he is easily traceable by his satellite phone, which he uses to make frequent calls to Moscow, Izvestia said.

"His location for some reason is only a problem for federal powers," the article said.

The newspaper said that the only thing Russia's month-long "official criminal search" had produced was the seizure of Mr. Dudayev's 70-year-old brother, Bekmurza. Russian officials said he was detained in Grozny, the Chechen capital, last week, and is now being held in Moscow.

"So what is the matter... with the effectiveness and professionalism of our power structures?" Izvestia asked. "Either they don't want to find him, or they don't know how to do it."

Mr. Dudayev has been a thorn in Russia's side since he declared his tiny mountain republic independent from Russia in 1991.

Meanwhile in Grozny, Russian troops who rule the ruins of the city by day as Chechen snipers and commando squads are using the city's sewer system to infiltrate the capital, making their lives miserable after dark.

"Life here really begins once night falls," said Sasha, a 21-year-old Russian Interior Ministry soldier guarding a checkpoint on what was once the main business street of the devastated Chechen capital.

"Some Chechens slip in during the day — young men and women who have correct papers and pass through our checkpoints," said Andrei, another Interior Ministry soldier.

"Once they're inside they create diversions or get a gun

Burmese rebels abandon last major base

MAE SOT, Thailand (AP) — One of the world's longest-running insurgencies abandoned its last major stronghold Tuesday after intense shelling and gassing by Burmese troops, rebel and Thai sources said.

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Karen rebels said in interviews they did not have enough weapons and ammunition to defend the base from the attack by thousands of Burmese soldiers.

They said the Burmese troops fired an undetermined type of gas into the base, which some said made the rebels unconscious and others said stopped their breathing and made their eyes tearful.

A Bangkok-based support group for the Burmese opposition, Burma Issues, said in a statement that the "poison shells," interspersed with regular artillery, caused disorientation and unconsciousness. The group said an unknown number of rebels

were killed in the shelling or rendered unconscious and unable to evacuate. Some of them were reported to have died from the chemical poisoning.

The Karen said two of their troops were killed and 12 injured in the overnight attack. They had no casualty figures for the Burmese soldiers.

At 8 a.m., the Burmese soldiers occupied Kawmoora and witnesses said they executed the injured and debilitated rebels left behind, Burma Issues said.

The group said the Burmese junta "is currently demonstrating a frightful contempt for international human rights standards, international law regarding war and armed conflict, and the rights of the peoples."

A witness said camp Commander Gen. Htaw Hta led 1,000 troops out of the camp through the jungle deeper into Burma. But Col. Direk said about 1,000 rebels took sanctuary just across the border in Thailand while another 400 fled about 10 kilometres (6 miles) north of the base to regroup. There was no immediate explanation for the discrepancy.

The Karen are among about a dozen ethnic minorities that began fighting for their own sovereignty after Burma gained independence from Britain in 1948. With about 4,000 fighters, the group is the largest and most important of the four groups still fighting for greater autonomy.

The Karen rebels, known as the Karen National Union, issued a statement in Bangkok saying they withdrew from the base to return to guerrilla warfare.

"The withdrawal of the KNU from Kawmoora must therefore be seen not as defeat but the next logical step in the reconstruction of the KNU," the rebel statement said.

The base is just across the border from Thailand and about 375 kilometres (230 miles) northwest of Bangkok.

In Rangoon, military sources confirmed they had forced the Karen out of the base after a final two-week long push. They said Karen defectors, who had been aiding Burmese soldiers in the offensive, were clearing the mines surrounding the base to occupy Kawmoora.

The Burmese junta in December broke the unilateral ceasefire it declared in 1992

British cabinet approves N. Ireland peace proposals

Trial of alleged pub killers begins

LONDON (R) — Prime Minister John Major's cabinet Tuesday formally approved proposals aimed at bringing lasting peace to Northern Ireland after 25 years of violence.

The so-called framework document, the latest step in a peace process launched by the Irish and British governments in December 1993, will be published jointly by Mr. Major and Irish Premier John Bruton in Belfast Wednesday.

Protestant politicians crucial to the success of peace talks accused Mr. Major of preparing a sell-out to Dublin and ignoring the wishes of the Protestant majority in the province, who want its historical links with Britain maintained.

The document, drawn up by the London and Dublin governments and agreed six months after a truce by Catholic and Protestant guerrillas, sets out the framework for all-party talks on a political settlement.

"The government agreed that the framework document and the proposals for an accountable government in Northern Ireland should now be published in a form recommended by the Northern Ireland Secretary (Sir Patrick Mayhew)," a statement from Mr. Major's office, after a special meeting of the cabinet, said.

Irish officials said Mr. Major and Mr. Bruton will meet in Belfast Wednesday to launch the proposals in which the two countries are expected to drop or amend their respective claims to the sovereignty of the province.

Mr. Major is expected to appeal directly to the people of Northern Ireland not to reject the draft plan out of hand. He will urge them instead to study the document, 600,000 copies of which will be printed in their own homes, officials said.

Mr. Major will point out that the proposals will go ahead only if approved by all Northern Ireland's political parties, by the London Parliament and by a referendum of the province's people.

But Unionist politicians fear the document will pander to Republicans who seek the unification of Ireland and waged a bloody 25-year battle to oust Britain from the province.

Setting out their own proposals for the future of the province Tuesday, the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) said: "It would now appear that the government... hopes to use a referendum to deliver Northern Ireland's affairs into the hands of all-Ireland political institutions."

UUP leader James Molyneux said the two governments' proposals were so detailed that they amounted to "a kind of United Nations Charter."

He urged instead a six-month period of intensive, but ad hoc, talks between the Northern Irish political parties and the two governments designed to solve specific problems and build mutual confidence.

After that, he said, a Northern Ireland Assembly, could be elected gradually to take over the day-to-day administration of the province, which is at present governed directly from London.

The document is believed to include proposals for a Northern Ireland Assembly, cross-border bodies and new arrangements between London and Dublin.

Mr. Molyneux's colleague David Trimble accused the British government of failing to take Unionist views into account. "They have ignored our position," he told BBC Radio.

Ian Paisley, the fiery head of the Democratic Unionist Party, also adamantly rejected the initiative.

"I have seen what is in the document... and what I have seen... is totally and absolutely repugnant to all the Unionist people of Northern Ireland," he told British television.

Meanwhile, the trial of four men alleged to have taken part in the murder of eight customers in a loyalist attack on a pub in Greysteel, Northern Ireland, began Monday in Belfast.

On Halloween in 1993, two armed and masked men entered the Rising Sun Pub in the village of Greysteel and opened fire for several

minutes, the court heard.

A third man allegedly kept guard outside the bar with a sawed-off short-gun and a fourth drove the getaway car.

Seven people died instantly, and an eighth died six months later from his injury.

Geoffrey Deeney, 23, Stephen Irwin, 21, Thomas Knight, 25, and Brian McNeill, 26, have all denied the charge of murder.

Mr. Knight has also denied taking part in the murders of four men shot dead in a separate Ulster Freedom Fighters attack at Castlerock, County Londonderry, the previous March.

It is alleged Mr. Knight was the driver of a getaway van used in that shooting.

The Ulster Freedom Fighters claimed responsibility for the Greysteel killings, which were supposedly in retaliation for an Irish Republican Army bombing in the Protestant Shankill Road area.

In a separate development, Irish opposition leader Bertie Ahern condemned a police swoop Monday on Republican activists in Northern Ireland which provoked a street clash as British and Irish leaders prepared to spell out hopes for lasting peace.

Seven activists in Sinn Fein, the political wing of the Irish Republican Army, were detained by Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) officers who also raided the party's headquarters in Londonderry, Northern Ireland's second city.

U.N. tries to negotiate aid into Bosnian enclave

SARAJEVO (R) — The United Nations sought on Tuesday to negotiate a path for aid convoys through battlefields to the encircled Bosnian Muslim enclave of Bihać, where it says thousands of civilians face starvation.

U.N. special envoy Yasushi Akashi met rebel Serbs from the Krajina region of Croatia in their self-styled capital Knin to plead with them to lift blockades on aid convoys to Bihać and end the "systematic harassment" of U.N. peacekeepers.

Aides suggested he would reserve the right to threaten to use military force to push aid into Bihać, though the U.N. has consistently shied away from using its muscle in the past.

"That is one of the options that has been discussed and it is on the table," said U.N. spokesman Alexander Ivanok, noting that U.N. Commander General Bertrand D. Lapresle was with Mr. Akashi in the meeting with Krajina Serb leader Milan Martić.

Krajina Serbs, working with their Bosnian Serb allies and rebel Muslims loyal to local warlord Fikret Abdić, have effectively blockaded the Bihać "safe area" in northwest Bosnia, cutting aid to more than 160,000 people.

U.N. officials and the Bosnian government, whose 5th Corps has been involved in heavy fighting in Bihać after an offensive in January, say hundreds of people and possibly thousands are close to starvation.

"The bottom line is both the Abdić forces and the Krajina Serbs are using food as a weapon of war, trying to deny food to the people of Bihać," said U.N. relief spokesman Kris Janowski.

Mr. Abdić, in a letter to the U.N. Security Council broadcast on his radio station, accused the Bosnian government and U.N. of engineering a humanitarian crisis to get international sympathy for the Bosnian Muslim cause.

"Another 'humanitarian offensive' is in sight to protect (Bosnian Muslim President) Alija Izetbegovic and his 5th Corps," Mr. Abdić said. He accused the 5th Corps of fighting in a demilitarised zone and of deliberately provoking hostilities to block aid convoys.

"In fear of another counter-offensive the same infrastructure of brainwashing innocent public opinion has been started,"

Mr. Abdić said in the letter.

Bihać is seen as a potential flashpoint that could reignite fighting across Bosnia, subdued under a Jan. 1 ceasefire intended to lay the ground for a negotiated peace under the terms proposed by a "contact group" of major powers.

That plan suffered a setback Monday, however, when Serbia made clear it could not embrace the plan — requiring it to recognise Bosnia and Croatia — without the international community first lifting crippling sanctions imposed to penalise it for supporting Bosnian Serbs.

Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev, who has long argued that rump Yugoslavia must be encouraged in its peace efforts, spent a weekend discussing the plan with Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic. But Mr. Milosevic made it clear he could not consider recognition before sanctions were lifted.

"Belgrade is categorical — first lifting of sanctions, and then everything else," the official Tanjug News Agency said.

In Bihać itself, thousands of civilians were reported by the U.N. to be going hungry after months without aid. A convoy of 10 trucks made it into the area last week but that was the first such shipment in more than nine months.

In Geneva, U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) spokesman Ron Redmond condemned what he called the "cynical exploitation of humanitarian aid as a weapon of war."

"While these people play their cynical game, innocent people are still starving in Bihać," Mr. Redmond said.

On Tuesday the U.N. said its latest aid convoy trying to get into the Bihać pocket was held up by Mr. Abdić's forces at Maljevac, near the Croatia-Bosnia border. The previous day Krajina Serb forces stopped the convoy only about 15 kilometres short of Bihać town.

The Bosnian government and the Kremlin formally established official inter-state relations Tuesday in the first steps toward full diplomatic ties. Interfax News Agency reported.

Diplomatic notes confirming relations were exchanged in Moscow, Russian Foreign Ministry spokesman Mikhail Demurin told the agency.

Ecuador, Peru trade charges of truce violations

LIMA (AP) — Ecuador and Peru once again accused each other of breaking a week-old ceasefire in their border war, as an advance team of military observers was due to arrive in the disputed jungle area Tuesday.

Peru's Joint Armed Forces Command said late Monday that Ecuadorian troops were being dropped by helicopter over the border zone, forcing Peruvian troops to defend their positions at Cueva De Los Tayos, Base Sur and Tiwinza.

Earlier Monday, Ecuador's military command charged that Peruvian forces were moving aggressively to try to consolidate those same positions, where the Ecuadorians were being "permanently harassed by infiltrating Peruvian patrols."

The military bases are among several outposts that have been the object of conflicting claims by both countries since their border war broke out Jan. 26.

Adding to the confusion, Ecuadorian Defence Minister Jose Gallardo accused Peru Monday of "building false Tiwinzas" to prove the border post was in their hands.

Journalists who braved a rugged jungle trek to the disputed border area have been sending conflicting reports on who is in control of the military posts, which in most cases appear to consist of a few tents pitched in a clearing.

Ecuador and Peru signed a ceasefire agreement Friday calling for a demilitarised zone and for a team of international military observers to monitor the ceasefire in the disputed border area in the Andes Cordillera range.

Meanwhile, an advance team of military observers was due to arrive in the border area Tuesday to monitor the border under terms of the ceasefire while a final diplomatic settlement is negotiated.

Argentina, Brazil, Chile and the United States, which guaranteed the 1942 Rio Protocol that set the current disputed frontier and helped mediate an end to the latest fighting, will provide the 20 diplomats and army troops set to serve as observers. Later, some 20 more observers are to be sent in.

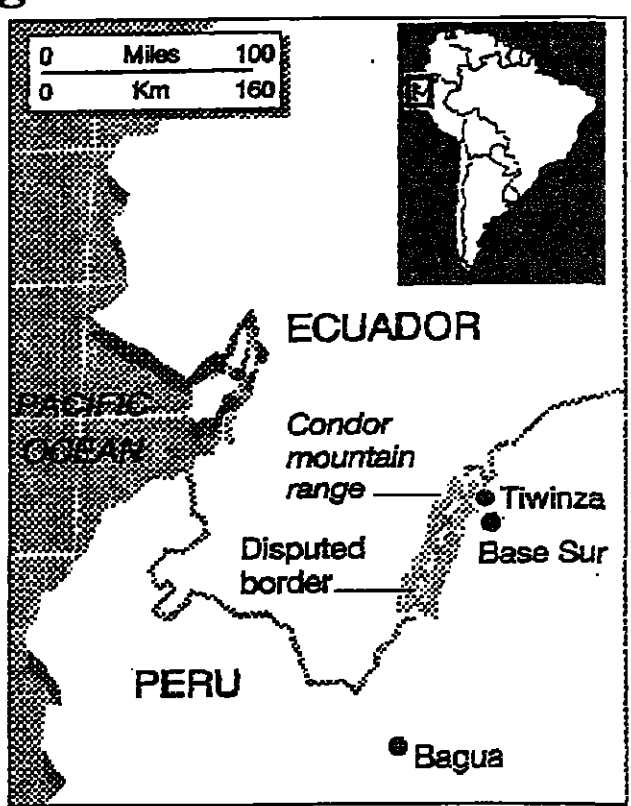
The guarantors will send in their advance team under Brazilian Brigadier General Ariel Pereira Da Fonseca to establish a demilitarised zone. The two countries also have agreed to exchange prisoners within 90 days.

The observers will be flown on a Brazilian military C-130 to the southern Ecuadorian city of Cuenca, from which they will travel to the town of Gualaquiza on the Ecuadorian side, and to the border zone itself.

It was not clear how long they would spend along the border before crossing to the town of Piura on Peru's side.

But their mission could be extended past the 90-day time frame if necessary, under the ceasefire accord.

It also remains to be decided whether the international observers will help in the actual demarcation of the



78-kilometre (48-mile) unmarked border. If Ecuador and Peru agree to that, cartographers and geographers would be sent in for the effort.

Peruvian military sources said late Monday that two Ecuadorian helicopters had strafed Base Sur and Tiwinza over the weekend without causing injuries among the Peruvian defenders.

The Peruvian high command said that helicopters were also transporting troops and supplies into the border area, in violation of the ceasefire agreement.

Peru, the statement added, "has not carried out any aerial flights or military operations" in the border area.

Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori Monday cancelled a trip to the border area to prove his claims that the Peruvian flag flies over the disputed military posts, a presidential spokesman said without providing reason for the cancellation.

Trouble is brewing as world reviews nuclear treaty

LONDON (R) — The future of a world treaty aimed at preventing the spread of nuclear weapons, one of the major concerns of the post-cold war era, may now be in question because of disputes over whether and how to extend the pact.

The non-proliferation treaty (NPT) came into force in 1970 for a duration of 25 years and is up for renewal at a U.N. conference in New York which starts in April.

Covering more than 170 countries, it effectively sanctions five official nuclear powers — the United States, Russia, China, France and Britain — while committing other signatories to renounce nuclear weapons.

The major powers point to cases of nuclear smuggling following the collapse of the

Soviet Union and the crises over Iraq and North Korea as examples of new dangers.

They want the treaty to be extended indefinitely and unconditionally, preserving the nuclear status quo.

To achieve this, they need a simple majority of NPT signatories, currently more than 85 votes.

But diplomats say it is far from clear that the number is within their grasp.

Some other states, many of them in the developing world, say that the United States, Russia and others must do more to cut their arsenals and agree a formal ban on nuclear testing.

They also accuse the big powers of hypocrisy and of simply wanting to preserve an exclusive, secure club.

Some countries widely believed to have nuclear weapons, including Israel, India and Pakistan, have not signed the NPT. Arab states and Iran argue that the West has been prepared to overlook this in the case of Israel, its Middle East ally.

Egypt is now locked in a fierce dispute with Israel over the Jewish state's refusal to sign the NPT, adding further complications to the already fragile Middle East peace process.

Indonesian Foreign Minister Ali Alatas, whose country currently chairs the 11-nation Non-Aligned Movement, accused nuclear weapons states Tuesday of failing to live up to their treaty obligations.

"The NPT has not been fully implemented by nuclear countries, especially on dis-

armament and nuclear testing and on giving a guarantee that they will not attack the non-nuclear ones," he told reporters.

Non-Aligned countries, a grouping which covers mostly developing countries that declined to take sides during the cold war, had not yet decided whether to support indefinite extension of the treaty. Mr. Alatas said.

As a result of such problems, diplomats say, it is not yet clear whether the United States and its allies will get the number of votes they need to extend the treaty.

Diplomats say those in favour currently number close to 70 countries, still well short of the target. They include members of major Western institutions like NATO and the Union.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published in English by the Jordan Press Foundation
Established 1975

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Gimmick for a day

ISLAMIST AND leftist deputies stage-managed some sort of a parliamentary coup yesterday when they collaborated to prevent the last meeting of the Lower House of Parliament in the second ordinary session from convening. That they did to stop the House from discussing a draft legislation that would repeal three laws which prohibit the sale of land to Israelis and impose an economic boycott against the Jewish state.

While the opposition has thus succeeded in putting off debate of the bill until Parliament reconvenes either in May or June, as is widely expected, we wonder whether the whole move is in fact more than a public relations stunt. For it does not make much political sense, at least from a judicial point of view, to start a tug of war between the government and the coalition of parliamentary groups opposed to the peace treaty over this particular issue.

The government of Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker had hoped that Parliament would have yesterday referred to its Judiciary Committee a 1973 law that prohibits and penalises the sale of real estate to Israelis, a 1958 law that slams total economic boycott against Israel and a 1953 law that forbids trade and commerce with the Jewish state. Some of these legislations carry the death penalty for violators. There are clearly other laws that are less obvious or direct, which can be construed as repugnant to the peace treaty.

The dispute over this issue is unnecessary because, from a strictly juridical sense, any treaty that is ratified by the government supersedes any other national legislation. This means that any piece of legislation, which is contrary to any such treaty, will not be upheld in a court of law. Since the Jordanian-Israeli treaty was approved by both chambers of Parliament and was accordingly ratified by the King, there can be no grounds or justification to oppose any legislative initiative to amend or repeal laws that run counter to the letter or spirit of its terms. As for the emotionally charged issue of land sale to Israelis, there is in place sufficient safeguards to prevent any panic. Foreigners, including Israelis, can purchase land only within municipal boundaries and even then only after a cabinet approval. If many Jordanians feel so strongly about not selling real estate to Israelis or any other group of foreigners, all they would have to do is exercise restraint and avoid becoming easy prey to manipulators and exploiters. True, national sentiment can be best promoted by public awareness of all probable dangers that may lie ahead. But people do not need the stick of the law to stop selling any part of the homeland to any side, be it Israeli or otherwise.

Just as there is no law and there can be no sustainable law that would force people to sell land to foreigners, the same goes for the areas of trade and commerce. The government, on the other hand, is legally bound to do all that is necessary to streamline all the country's laws so that they become harmonious with its old and new international obligations. Any other course would be both illegal and illogical.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

A COLUMNIST in al Ra'i daily Tuesday called on Arab countries to support Egypt's bid to force Israel to abandon its nuclear programme, stressing that nuclear weapons in the region posed a serious threat to all Arabs. Hosni Mubarak said that Israel is the only country in the region which possesses nuclear weapons. For its part, the United States condones Israel's actions, helps it to mass nuclear weapons and continues to supply it with economic and military assistance, said the writer. At the same time, he said, we see the United States trying to force Egypt to renew its commitment to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and to deny the Arabs the right to arm themselves against potential threat from the Jewish state.

It is the duty of the Arab countries not to leave Egypt alone facing the American pressure and the Israeli arrogance, said the writer. Israel's nuclear monopoly in the area is dangerous because it means continued Israeli hegemony over the entire region and a direct threat to the Arab Nation's future, added the writer. The alternative to Israel's abandoning its nuclear programme, said the writer, is for the Arabs to possess their own nuclear might in order to protect themselves and deter Israel's plans in their region.

COMMENTING on the deadlock in the Israeli-Palestinian talks over the implementation of the second phase of the Oslo agreement, a writer in Al Dustour said that the Palestinians should persevere and never retreat from their legitimate position. Saleh Qulab said that Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat has wisely chosen to remain steadfast in the self-rule areas rather than listen to calls from within the Palestinian people to withdraw and return to Tunis. Any withdrawal from the Gaza Strip is tantamount to another catastrophe, said the writer who added that return to Tunis by the Palestine National Authority (PNA) would mean an escape from responsibility. The writer said that the Palestinian leadership ought to insist that Israel redeploy its forces in the West Bank and that Palestinians be allowed to hold their planned elections as stipulated in the Oslo deal. Furthermore there should not be any suspension or freezing of the Israeli-Palestinian talks as this would benefit the Israelis and would mean running away from responsibility of meeting the challenge, added the writer. The writer said that the self-rule constituted the first step in the Palestinians drive to attain their national aspirations and, therefore, the Palestinians should cling hard to their rights and strive to fulfill their national dream.

Washington Watch

One state's view of Arab concerns

By Dr. James Zogby

THE ARAB-American Institute recently sponsored a poll in the northeastern state of New Hampshire. We were partners in the poll with Fox television news of New York City and the New York Post. The pollster was the John Zogby Group of New York.

While the New York media focused its attention on the poll's questions on presidential politics, we commissioned our portion of the poll to develop ideas for the types of issues that Arab-Americans could and should raise in the upcoming 1996 elections. In American politics, this is known as "testing the waters," that is, looking for a general idea of where public attitudes are at the moment. New Hampshire is a key state since it is the site of the first presidential primary in the U.S., and in many ways a test of New Hampshire voters is a good indication of how voters think nationally.

The poll indicates that, if we are going to establish our case to support the Arab countries, we have serious work to do. But it also shows the base from which we will have to work; and in some cases that base is solid while in most cases it will require some work. Among the positive findings was a much lower than expected anti-Arab-American and anti-Muslim sentiment. In fact, the attitudes towards these two groups were about the same as attitudes towards Asian-Americans and American-Jews — which shows that an initial goal of our empowerment project, allowing us to function as other ethnic groups do, is being realised. This provides a solid basis for our political work.

Another positive finding in the poll was that Egypt once again outpaces Israel in popularity. Egypt's favourable rating was 42 per cent, while its unfavourable rating was 32 per cent. The figures for Israel were 44 per cent favourable and 40 per cent unfavourable. While Israel's favourable rating was slightly higher, Egypt's net rating (subtracting the unfavourable rating from the favourable rating) came out to be 10 per cent, markedly higher than Israel's four per cent.

Other Arab countries did not fare as well, but most showed an improvement over polls done in previous years. Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, for example, showed identical 39 per cent favourable ratings compared with identical 44 per cent unfavourable ratings. Jordan had a 31 per cent favourable rating with an unfavourable rating of 45 per cent.

Lebanon has not yet recovered from the strong negatives engendered by its 17-year civil war, and the hostage-taking and the bombing of the U.S. Marine Corps barracks which many Americans still associate with that country. Lebanon's favourable rating was a low 19 per cent and its unfavourable rating was a high 60 per cent. Surprisingly, the same is true of the Palestinians. The positive feelings the peace accords brought out were outweighed by decades of anti-Palestinian propaganda which still shapes many attitudes, leaving the Palestinians rating of only 19 per cent positive to 64 per cent negative.

By comparison, Germany rates a 74 per cent favourable and 15 per cent unfavourable, Mexico 47 per cent favourable and 40 per cent unfavourable, and Russia 45 per cent favourable and 40 per cent unfavourable.

More importantly, when New Hampshire voters were asked whether they support continued foreign aid to countries which receive such assistance, only 20 per cent support aid to Egypt and the same number support aid to the Palestinians while 32 per cent support continued aid to Israel. At the same time, 49 per cent support aid to Russia and 42 per cent support aid to Mexico.

The poll indicates that Egypt, in particular, has a standing that is strong enough to make it an issue on the

agenda, but that alone will not put it on the agenda. Work must be done. For example, Egypt's position on the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) — that it will not sign the treaty unless and until Israel also signs it — should be supported. If the demand that Israel sign the treaty is stated as an Egyptian position, it can garner strong public support.

It also appears that U.S. aid to Egypt is not popular precisely because Egypt has never actively stated its case for this aid. Instead, the aid is viewed as tied to the aid to Israel as a part of the Camp David accords (a position adopted in order to win congressional support). But as the silent partner in this arrangement, Egypt has never used its popularity to lay out the case for the aid, as shown by the fact that aid to Egypt is much less popular than the country as a whole. (Note that the ratio of support for Israeli aid to support for Israel as a whole is 1/2, while the same ratio for Egypt is 1/2; there is a reservoir of positive feeling for Egypt that has not yet been tapped on the foreign aid question).

Lebanon and the Palestinians, it is clear, have serious work to do. Lebanon, and Lebanese-Americans in particular, have for too long rested on their past glories. They have failed to appreciate the tremendous damage done to Lebanon's reputation over the past two decades. A national campaign for Lebanon is clearly in order if public opinion is to consider Lebanon in the more positive light it deserves.

So, too, is the case with the Palestinians. Unfortunately, the PLO has never taken seriously the need to do meaningful public relations work in the U.S. Even after the Madrid peace conference when U.S. public opinion was ready for a change, the Palestinian leadership did not make a concerted effort to reshape U.S. opinion. The PLO office is still understaffed, underfunded and without a directive or a mandate to fully engage in a U.S. public relations campaign.

When I raise the importance of this issue to various Arab leaders, I am frequently asked three questions:

Can it be done?

Is it important to do it?

How could it be done?

Can it be done? Ask the Saudis. While Israel has a plus 4 rating and Saudi Arabia has a minus 5, given the fact that the poll has a margin of error of +/- 4.5 per cent, the Saudi and Israeli ratings are virtually statistically equal.

Imagine: Israel with the most powerful foreign lobby in Washington, with the support of a tremendously influential Jewish community and an extraordinarily successful public relations effort is now only viewed as slightly more favourable than Saudi Arabia, if at all. Why? Because, over the past five years, the Saudis have waged a public relations battle in the U.S. Despite the enormous cultural and religious differences between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia, and despite the fact that most Americans historically tend to resent countries they expend lives and dollars to defend, Saudi Arabia's campaign has succeeded in turning U.S. opinion into a more favourable view of the kingdom. (A poll just three years ago showed Saudi Arabia with a 32 per cent favourable and 48 per cent unfavourable rating).

Is it important? Since the U.S. Congress shapes so much of U.S. foreign policy and perceptions of what is popular and acceptable, it is critically important to have or win a favourable public opinion rating.

Each time the pro-Israel side shapes the public debate on a question, they succeed to some degree in influencing public policy. Elements of this community are still, as I have noted for months, engaged in a strategy to discredit Saudi Arabia (as unstable, bankrupt and backward), or

Egypt (as unnecessary, untrustworthy and unstable), or Islam (as the new post-cold war "enemy"). It seems that the Israelis have perceived a danger in two Arab countries being perceived as close allies of the U.S. and popular with the public. It is imperative that the Arab countries respond and take seriously the need to not only improve their public relations standing but also to use their standing to help shape the U.S. public debate on Middle East priorities.

How can it be done? The problem is simple and has been well-developed by the Israelis. First, cultivate friends — elected officials, constituent groups (business leaders, interest groups, churches), especially those groups whose interests are served through their relationship with the Arab World. It is especially important that Arab leaders work with Arab-Americans — we are, in the end, their strongest supporters. And our strength and theirs are intimately related to one another.

Next, it is important to establish direct contact with the U.S. people. I have long argued that we have a great deal to learn from the Israeli model. When an Israeli prime minister comes to the U.S., he first goes to major public events in cities like New York, Chicago and Los Angeles (speaking to thousands and appearing on television and radio), establishing his public message before he comes to Washington. By the time he arrives in Washington, U.S. leaders have seen the public support and heard the public message.

Arab leaders, on the other hand, rarely go anywhere other than New York (to appear at the United Nations — a venue Americans don't pay attention to), and then to Washington for quiet meetings with the president and congressional leaders. On occasion, they will address a think tank in Washington — but almost never will they venture out into the real America and give the American people a chance to see them, know them (possibly come to like them) and see their message in their local media.

In an earlier poll we did, we found that President Hosni Mubarak was far more popular in the U.S. than Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. Imagine if Mr. Mubarak were to take his message on nuclear non-proliferation or what must be done to make the peace process work, to major U.S. cities. Arab-Americans would gladly sponsor such events — it would be a plus for both Egypt and the local Arab-American communities (who would clearly gain in stature from such sponsorships). It would be a plus for the U.S. people who would hear, from a leader they respect, what should be done to build peace. And it would be a plus for the U.S., since it would provide badly needed balance to our foreign policy debate.

The rest of the New Hampshire poll, as cited in the New York Post, also found that Kansas Senator Robert Dole held a commanding lead over all other Republican challengers in that state's Republican primary. Mr. Dole received 45 per cent support while his closest competitors, CNN commentator Pat Buchanan and Texas Senator Phil Gramm each received 10 per cent.

The poll also showed that President Clinton would easily defeat any and all potential Democratic challengers, if the primary were held today. Mr. Clinton received 66 per cent of the Democratic support, with his nearest possible competitor (Nebraska Senator Bob Kerrey) receiving only 9 per cent.

If the general election were held today, the poll found that Mr. Clinton would defeat any of his potential Republican rivals except Mr. Dole. This held true for all the possible three-way races including former chairman of the joint chiefs of staff running as an independent: Mr. Clinton won all those possible races except the ones including Mr. Dole.

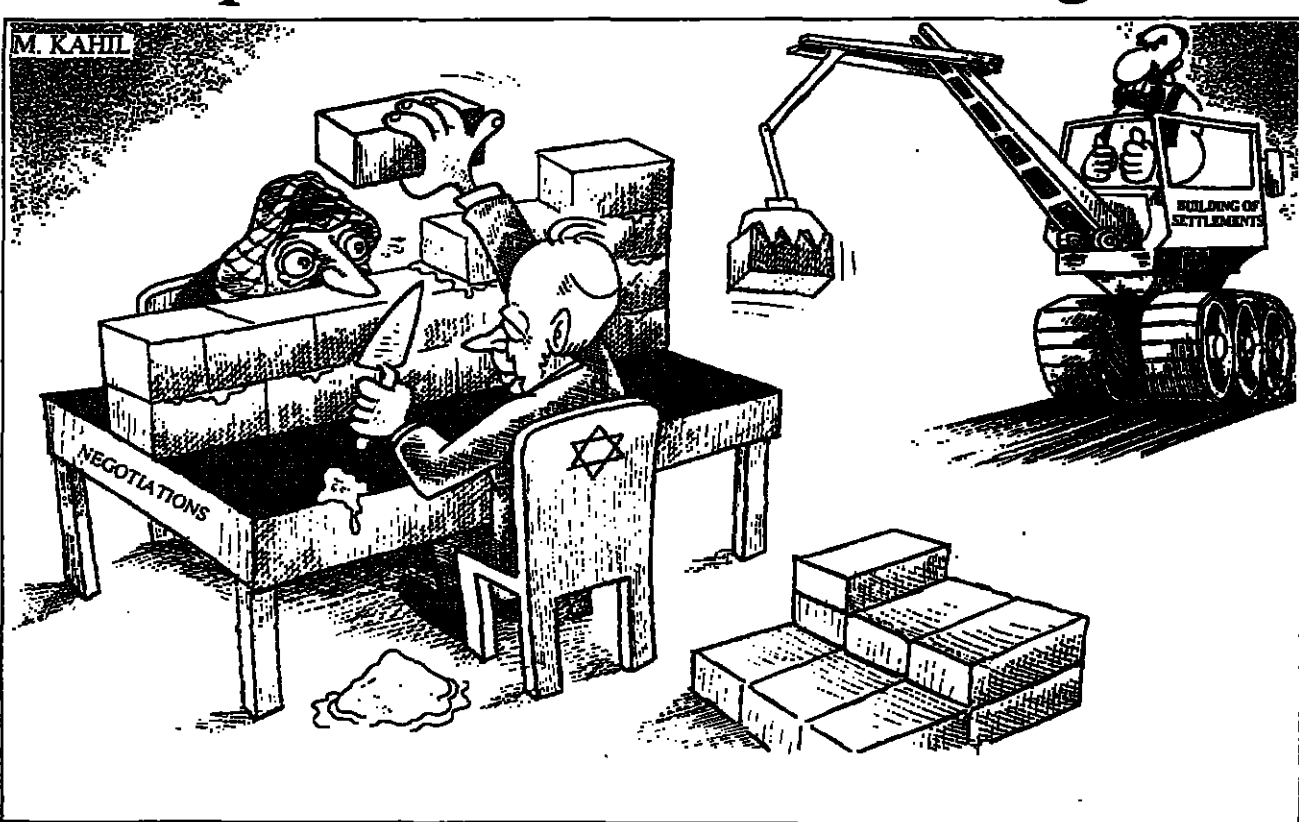
Real peace is not on Rabin's agenda

By Jamil Hilal

ISRAEL IS to build 30,000 new homes in the occupied West Bank and Jerusalem in the coming three or four years. The disclosure, some 16 months after the signing of the Oslo accords between the PLO and Israel, of the Israeli plan, provides one more piece of evidence that peace with the Palestinians is not on the agenda of the present Israeli Labour coalition government. It is becoming clearer every day that the Rabin government finds even the Oslo agreement, with its built-in bias against an equitable peace that would guarantee self-determination to the Palestinians, a nuisance as it arrogantly pursues the imposition of its own settlement, using towards that end the favourable balance of power at the bilateral, regional and international levels.

The fact that Israel, in the Oslo accords, recognised the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people has misled many Palestinians into believing that such recognition was an indirect way of acknowledging their national rights. It soon became more obvious, however, that the Israeli move was devoid of substantive significance, since it excluded accepting the right of Palestinians to an independent state, let alone the stipulated U.N. solution to the plight of Palestinian refugees (i.e. General Assembly Resolution 194, which specifies their right to return or compensation).

Not content with the one-sided nature of the Oslo agreement, which accorded Israel PLO recognition without any Israeli commitment to either withdraw from the 1967-occupied Palestinian territories or to accept the Palestinian right to self-determination, Israel has been busy since the signing of the declaration of principles in September 1993 trying to predetermine the outcome of the "final status negotiations" scheduled to start by 1996. It has done this by continuing the business of occupation and colonial settlement as if there were no peace negotiations with the Arab



states, or any agreement with the PLO. In fact, Israel has selected to implement from the accords only those aspects which highlight its complete control of borders, all security matters in the Palestinian "self-rule" area and the rest of the occupied territories, and which grant it a veto on all matters of importance to Palestinian life. In this, Israel has benefited from the absence in the Oslo accords of an independent international mechanism for implementing the agreements between the two parties: The more so since, notwithstanding its self-styled role as "honest broker" in the Arab-Israeli conflict, the U.S. has thrown its weight behind its strategic ally.

As the more powerful, Israel is left in complete control of which aspects of the agreements with the Palestinian side it implements and when; hence the delay in transferring the specified functions to the Palestinian authority and in the various tactics being used to get round the redeployment of Israeli troops in the West Bank (away from population centres) as a prerequisite for elections to the self-rule council. The

redemption of Israeli troops stipulated by the accords should have been completed by July 1994 so that general elections could take place; yet Israel is still procrastinating on this vital aspect of the agreement. The heightened settlement activity in the West Bank, the continued shooting of Palestinians (including policemen) by the Israeli occupying army and special units, the continued detention of over 5,000 Palestinians in Israeli jails, the use of collective punishment, the passing in the Knesset of a law banning PLO activities in Jerusalem, Israel's unilateral freeze of its economic agreement with the PLO, together with the worsening of economic conditions, have led to fast-growing disillusionment and disappointment among Palestinians.

The hope that the Israeli-Palestinian agreements, despite their inherent political imbalances, would open the door to the establishment in the not-too-distant future of an independent Palestinian state has been dashed by the Rabin government's antagonism to the legitimate rights and aspirations of the Palestinian people. These rights and aspirations

were embodied in Palestine National Council (PNC) resolutions, particularly those adopted in 1988, and were highlighted by the intifada. This hostility has been most obvious since the Oslo accords and its follow-up agreements in several areas: expansion of settlement activity; the building of roads (at a cost of \$500m) in the West Bank and Gaza Strip connecting these settlements directly to Israel; and the refusal — under the guise of concern for the security of the settlers — to redeploy troops from the population centres of the West Bank as had been specified in unambiguous terms, and doing everything to predetermine, prior to final status negotiations, the future of East Jerusalem, borders, and the limits and nature of Palestinian "sovereignty."

In all these issues the Israeli government behaves towards the Palestinians as no more than a national minority whose human rights do not exceed administrative and cultural autonomy. Hence the powers it is proposing for the Palestine National Authority (PNA) in the self-rule area hardly match those of a local authority in a Euro-

pean country. In reality, all the issues dealing with Palestinians' effective control over their lives in any meaningful way are postponed to a final phase of the negotiations, and the lack of any mechanism for implementation have spurred the Israeli government, with tacit U.S. support, to regard the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip as disputed and not occupied territories, and to continue "creating facts" in the territories to decide their future. What emerges from Israeli actions and plans in the West Bank and Gaza Strip is a Palestinian population contained, after the annexation of East Jerusalem with enlarged municipal boundaries (constituting nearly 22 per cent of the total area of the West Bank), in a number of "pockets" or "reservations" which are surrounded and dominated by blocks of Israeli settlements, and supervised by a Palestinian council that lacks any legislative powers and is subject to the pressures and demands of the Israeli government.

The Oslo agreement has fractured the unity of the Palestinian people between those residing in the occu-

pied territories, and those in exile (mostly as refugees). Now Israel is trying to fragment those Palestinians living in the territories into "reserves" allotted to them by Israel on land left after it has completed its annexation for its colonising settlers and their security. It is this forced Israeli settlement, rather than the concern to find a political settlement entailing an end to the occupation, that mocks the peace and demands an immediate review of Palestinian political strategy. The issue of settlement activity and Jerusalem must occupy a central place in this strategy.

The PLO and the Palestine National Authority have a duty and an opportunity now to mobilise support from all quarters on a platform that gives absolute priority to the complete cessation of all Israeli settlement activities in the West Bank, including Jerusalem, and that would suspend negotiations with Israel until this happens. The PLO and the PNA should insist on tackling the question of Arab Jerusalem now and not leave it to the final status phase of the negotiations, since Israel is going ahead in changing this historic and unique city which Palestinians wish to see restored as the capital of their future state.

The agenda of the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations therefore needs restating so that it centres on the issues of dismantling Israeli settlements, Israeli withdrawal from Palestinian territory occupied in June 1967, and the establishment of a Palestinian state, and on the means of addressing the acknowledged rights of Palestinian refugees as an integral part of the Palestinian people. If these issues are not addressed, then whatever emerges will not be peace but an imposed settlement that deliberately ignores the rights and aspirations of the historically wronged party in the conflict.

Jamil Hilal is a Palestinian writer living in Britain. He is a member of the Palestine National Council. This article is reprinted from the East International.

Features

Drop the m... keep mind

By James P. Grant

This article was written shortly before Mr. Grant's death on Jan. 28

NEW YORK — Illness has forced me to resign as executive director of the United Nations Children's Fund after 15 years. It has been a privilege to serve as noble as that of the cause as noble as that of the world's children, who are our collective future. From my hospital bed, I would like to share some personal

As the United States rethinks and reforms its social and foreign aid policies, we must ensure that children — American children and the poorest children in the world's poorest countries — are not caught in the political cross fire. Bipartisanship for children has worked well in the past; it can work now.

To ensure that their well-being is not inadvertently sacrificed to partisan or ideological interests, Americans must reaffirm that children constitute a special case requiring consistent bipartisan action and a first call on society's resources.

Four years ago, the World Summit for Children set ambitious goals: a major reduction in child deaths; a halving of child malnutrition; immunisation levels of 90 per cent; complete eradication of polio; an end to iodine deficiency, which causes most cases of preventable mental retardation; a drastic reduction in the number of children who go blind; an effective primary education for at least 80 per cent of girls as well as boys; clean water and safe sanitation for all communities; and universal ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Some of these goals were to be achieved by 1995, others by 2000. Most industrial nations have already achieved these targets. But in impoverished inner cities of wealthy and developing countries alike, reaching them is an urgent priority.

Achieving the goals will mean that some 2.5 million fewer children will die in 1996 than in 1990. Tens of millions will be spared the insidious sabotage wrought

Kuwait emb...

By William MacLean
Reuter

KUWAIT — Kuwait's government and opposition are keeping one eye firmly on parliamentary elections next year as they square off for a high-stakes tussle over the economy.

Both have political hopes riding on the outcome of a dispute that could affect the economy for years and decide parliament's political complexion until the end of the century, analysts say. The argument is about two intertwined issues. The first is how to settle \$20 billion in long-standing private sector debt owed by a few thousand wealthy individuals and companies. The government has sparked parliamentary fury by suggesting debtors be allowed softer terms of settlement to end a problem that has enfeebled the banking system for a decade.

The other issue is a government call for Kuwaitis to start paying fees for heavily subsidised public services to

PLO wants wid...

(Continued from page 1)

"waste of time" Israel's "Jenin first" proposal under which the Palestinians would take over administration of the West Bank town without Israel withdrawing its troops.

Ahead of the meeting Mr. Arafat insisted on a rapid Israeli pullback.

"Israeli leaders are shilly-shallying and making several pretexts including security," the Palestinian leader charged in an interview with the London-based Arabic daily Al Hayat.

Mr. Arafat arrived in Cairo from Tunis where he failed to convince the PLO's Political Department chief Farouk Kaddoumi to take part in the Executive Committee meeting.

Mahmoud Abbas, a former negotiator who helped to draw up the Oslo autonomy

Drop the mean mood and keep minding the children

By James P. Grant

This article was written shortly before Mr. Grant's death on Jan. 28

NEW YORK — Illness has forced me to resign as executive director of the United Nations Children's Fund after 15 years. It has been a privilege to serve a cause as noble as that of the world's children, who are our collective future. From my hospital bed, I would like to share some personal concerns.

As the United States rethinks and reforms its social and foreign aid policies, we must ensure that children — American children and the poorest children in the world's poorest countries — are not caught in the political cross fire. Bipartisanship for children has worked well in the past; it can work now.

To ensure that their well-being is not inadvertently sacrificed to partisan or ideological interests, Americans must reaffirm that children constitute a special case requiring consistent bipartisan action and a first call on society's resources. Four years ago, the World Summit for Children set ambitious goals: a major reduction in child deaths; a halving of child malnutrition; immunisation levels of 90 per cent; complete eradication of polio; an end to iodine deficiency, which causes most cases of preventable mental retardation; a drastic reduction in the number of children who go blind; an effective primary education for at least 80 per cent of girls as well as boys; clean water and safe sanitation for all communities; and universal ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Some of these goals were to be achieved by 1995, others by 2000. Most industrial nations have already achieved these targets. But in impoverished inner cities of wealthy and developing countries alike, reaching them is an urgent priority.

Achieving the goals will mean that some 2.5 million fewer children will die in 1996 than in 1990. Tens of millions will be spared the insidious sabotage wrought

on their development by malnutrition. At least 750,000 fewer children each year will be disabled, blinded, crippled or mentally retarded.

Achievement of the 1995 targets will pave the way towards meeting the broader goals set for 2000, proving that it is possible to eradicate some of poverty's worst manifestations in the lives of the young.

There is something selfish, something excluding, something cruel in the temper of recent times that deeply concerns me.

It has led to an unraveling or weakening of the social fabric, of nations, communities and families, in many countries. What is particularly worrisome about this mean-spiritedness is that it is gaining ground precisely when, for the first time in history, we have the means to satisfy the basic needs of each and every human being.

It would be a tragic mistake to succumb to pessimism just when so much progress is being made.

In the 1995 "State of the World's Children" report, UNICEF has good news from the developing world. More than 100 of the developing nations — with more than 90 per cent of the developing world's children — are making significant progress towards the goals set four years ago. These achievements have not made the nightly news, but they have changed the lives of millions of families in some of the world's poorest communities where people have been empowered to help themselves.

These achievements are a suitable reply to those who say that goals are only set and never met, that there is only disaster and failure to report from the developing world, or that the United Nations family of organisations is not effective in helping to make the world a better place.

The task now for rich countries and poor is to get behind this momentum for change, to push towards the achievement of the great goals that have been set for the year 2000, and to overcome the worst aspects of poverty on the planet.

More than a half-century

ago, thanks to the Industrial Revolution, Arnold Toynbee wrote: "Our age is the first since the dawn of history that has dared dream it practical to make the benefits of civilisation available to all." That daring dream is even more practical today.

If, through a failure of nerve, an impulse of selfishness, a confusion of priorities, a loss of self-confidence, we deny that dream and walk into the 21st century looking backward, humankind will pay for its shortsightedness in spades.

The United States has provided enormous leadership to U.N. development efforts at many critical junctures — from John Kennedy's launching of the First Development Decade to U.S. backing of smallpox eradication — and I am sure that U.S. leadership will continue to play a vital role in the future.

By continuing to invest in American children and strengthening families, and by ensuring that foreign assistance makes a difference in the lives of the world's poorest children, the United States, as the world's sole superpower, would once more set the global standard and give a major boost to human development and economic growth at home and abroad.

Surveys in the industrialised countries show continuing support for aid and development — if that aid and development are focused on the poorest, and help people to help themselves. Politicians in both U.S. parties need to make it unthinkable for a country like America to turn its back on children and the poor.

Over the years I have seen how governments, opposing political parties, even armed adversaries, as well as the business sector, nongovernmental organisations and local communities, can work together for human progress — first and foremost for children. Let us all face forward towards the children, our collective future.

International Herald Tribune.



A Bosnian Muslim old woman cries in agony over the suffering the war has caused her (AFP photo)

Old people wait for the end — of the war, or their lives

By Samir Krifit

SARAJEVO — Cramped onto one floor of a former school, dozens of elderly Bosnians silently await the end of the war, or their lives, whichever comes first.

The makeshift old people's home was set up in August 1993 in a shell-shattered school building several hundred yards from the front line. It shelters 64 sick and old people with no one to turn to.

One doctor, five nurses, four orderlies and a social worker try to cope with the needs of both their live-in charges and 150 other elderly people, many living on their own.

Conditions are miserable. Many of the elderly are too sick or feeble to make it to the toilet, so they relieve themselves on the floor or in bed. Natural gas for heat is scarce, so rooms are often icy. For most, frugal meals of beans, lentils and rice are the only break in a day of staring at the walls.

The Red Cross contributes some canned food once a month. U.N. peacekeepers from France provide occasional favours — food, medicine, gasoline for the home's single car, and once old clothes donated by family members. Local charities have been able to help out with aid only three times since the home started.

"What they get is not nearly enough," said Nina Winkler, a Red Cross representative.

Dobrica Mulina, a 70-year-old retired history professor, spends his days in the smelly, narrow corridor. Sitting in her wheelchair at a table packed with books Ms. Mulina, affectionately known to her companions as "Seka" (sister), reads daily in an effort to escape the harsh reality of her life.

"I live in my isolated

little world of literature," she said, absently stroking her gray hair. "The apathy and the boredom of others around me makes me miserable and desperate."

Her resilience is all the more remarkable given her suffering — chronic diabetes forced doctors to recently amputate her right leg because increasingly poor circulation led to the threat of gangrene.

A daily shot of insulin each morning helps her relax and begin her day's reading.

She prefers the dark corridor to the room she shares with nine other women, most of them so sick they rarely leave their beds. Despite a broken window, stale air is heavy in the overcrowded room.

Without a single television or a radio for entertainment the day ends with the onset of dusk.

"I take a sleeping pill so as not to think about the past, the present, and the grim future," Ms. Mulina

said. She clings to hope that once the war is over, her daughter and grandchildren, who live in Liverpool, England, will come to take her away from the misery.

If she lives that long. Old age or sickness have killed 41 people at the home during the 18 months she has been there.

"Death is at home here," she said. "We are never sure what will come first — our end or the end of the war."

Others too are gloomy, the misery of daily existence compounded by the suffering they were exposed to before landing here.

Asia Smajlovic, 81, takes solace in religion. Her only son was killed at the beginning of the war in her hometown of Vrsar, 120 kilometres east of Sarajevo.

She fled Bosnian Serbs soon afterward, leaving her house, cattle and life behind. She moved in after finding temporary shelter in a refugee camp.

Bent nearly double by age, she manages to walk five times a day downstairs for water for her ritual wash-up before prayers. Low water pressure means taps and toilet bowls on the second floor are dry.

Abid Jahic, 69, fled with his family from Rogatica, 55 kilometres east of Sarajevo, when Serbs captured it at the beginning of the war.

The Jahics left for Zepa, an eastern enclave held by the United Nations to Zenica for medical treatment, while his wife and two daughters stayed behind.

Unable to return to the besieged enclave, Mr. Jahic was seriously wounded by a shell and was evacuated by the United Nations to Zenica for medical treatment, while his wife and two daughters stayed behind.

"If the officials here in the home hadn't allowed me to stay I would have died," Mr. Jahic said. "All I want is to see my family one more time before I die."

Kuwait embarks on high-stakes economic tussle

By William MacLean
Reuters

KUWAIT — Kuwait's government and opposition are keeping one eye firmly on parliamentary elections next year as they square off for a high-stakes tussle over the economy.

Both have political hopes riding on the outcome of a dispute that could affect the economy for years and decide parliament's political complexion until the end of the century, analysts say.

The argument is about two intertwined issues. The first is how to settle \$20 billion in long-standing private sector debt owed by a few thousand wealthy individuals and companies.

The government has sparked parliamentary fury by suggesting debtors be allowed softer terms of settlement to end a problem that has enfeebled the banking system for a decade.

The other issue is a government call for Kuwaitis to start paying fees for heavily subsidised public services to

curb a budget deficit that is slowly eating away the state's reserves.

Diplomats say the dispute pits the considerable influence of large merchant families against the expectations of ordinary Kuwaitis used to one of the world's most lavish welfare states.

Income tax is unknown, gasoline is cheaper than bottled water and civil servants retire on full pension after 20 years' work or less — expensive measures at a time of low oil prices.

Lawmakers say Kuwaitis will be willing to start paying fees or taxes only when the debtors — regarded by many people as among the wealthiest in society — pay their obligations.

The lawmakers, already angry over the loss through alleged graft and mismanagement of more than \$5 billion of public money invested abroad in recent years, strongly oppose giving even more lenient debt settlement terms to the wealthy.

Deputy Nasser Al Sanea

said softer terms would cost the treasury 1.6 billion dinars (\$5.3 billion). He said the original settlement terms set in 1993 and described by bankers as already rather generous, would earn it a tidy 2.4 billion (\$8 billion) — 60 per cent larger than this fiscal year's budget deficit.

Big merchants argue settlement under the original terms would trigger a property and stock price crash.

In October 1996 Kuwait will hold polls for the next four-year parliamentary term and both pro-government and opposition MPs are expected to court voters with promises of handouts.

While the prime minister by tradition is always the crown prince and a member of the ruling Sabah family, elections determine the political complexion of the legislature and thereby to some degree also the emirate's political stability.

"We do not want the difficult debt law to be changed. We don't want any new taxes or the government to lower spend-

ing," Islamist opposition MP Ahmad Baqer told Reuters.

"But if the debtors do pay up (under the 1993 terms) then we will consider how to settle the question of fees."

Newspapers have said the government would like the debtors to be allowed to pay only an average 35 per cent of their debts, among other changes. Under 1993 terms they must pay 45 per cent.

The debtors must pay their debts to the state, which bought the debts from banks three years ago in a debt rescue. The debt stems from a 1982 stock crash and Iraq's 1990-91 occupation.

Sanea said the dispute bore out the conclusion of a secret World Bank report on the economy. He reported it as concluding: "Kuwait's economy suffers from hesitant decision-making and is designed to serve a group of businessmen with short-term objectives without giving credence to the public interest."

Newspapers have said Prime Minister Sheikh Saad Al Abdullah Al Sabah, an advocate of changing the debt plan, recently met key opposition MPs to persuade them to support the debt reform.

But parliament has also been active. Its legislative committee last week proposed bills that would freeze fees at their January 1, 1995, levels and bar the imposition of new fees without parliamentary passage of a law.

The bills have yet to be debated by the full assembly.

"More talk about amendment of the debt law weakens the economic structure which depends on the sanctity and stability of laws and rules," said Al Sabah Economic Consultancy, which advocates imposition of fees and opposes changing debt terms.

"The probable political and social consequences (of the government's decisions) will influence the stability of future governments," it added.

PLO wants wider world role in peace process

(Continued from page 1)

"waste of time" Israel's "Jenin first" proposal under which the Palestinians would take over administration of the West Bank town without Israeli withdrawing its troops.

Ahead of the meeting Mr. Arafat insisted on a rapid Israeli pullback.

"Israeli leaders are shilly-shallying and making several pretexts including security," the Palestinian leader charged in an interview with the London-based Arabic daily Al Hayat.

Mr. Arafat arrived in Cairo from Tunis where he failed to convince the PLO's Political Department chief Farouk Kaddoumi to take part in the Executive Committee meeting.

Mahmoud Abbas, a former negotiator who helped to draw up the Oslo autonomy

agreements, also boycotted the meeting as did the Palestinian People's Party, which said it was "likely to further widen differences" among PLO factions.

One stay-away member told AFP: "The Executive Committee is a decision-making authority and not a tool in Arafat's hands."

Meanwhile the number of Palestinian labourers allowed into Israel rose to about 5,500 on Tuesday, the third day of a gradual reopening of the territories a month after a suicide bombing, the army said.

Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin agreed to ease from Sunday the restrictions which were imposed on Jan. 22 when 21 Israelis were blown up.

Only 900 workers were allowed in on Sunday and

3,000 on Monday. The army is issuing 15,000 permits to married Palestinians aged over 30 this week — 5,000 for the West Bank and 10,000 for Gaza.

Before the closure 50,000 Palestinians had permits to work in Israel and an estimated 10,000-20,000 more were employed illegally. And before work permits were introduced in March 1993, some 120,000 Palestinians had jobs in Israel.

The government has imported 59,000 foreign labourers and plans to bring in another 11,000 to replace the Palestinians who are seen as a security risk.

Israeli security forces on Tuesday arrested a Muslim fundamentalist leader in the occupied West Bank, Palestinian sources reported. Sheikh Jamil Hamami, 43,

was detained in the village of Bir Nabala. He has already been arrested several times in the past and held without trial under emergency laws.

Sheikh Hamami is close to the Islamic Resistance Movement Hamas, and head of an Islamic sciences committee which runs several schools in the West Bank, the sources said.

Israeli police firing rubber bullets shot and wounded a Palestinian vendor near Jerusalem's Old City on Tuesday, sparking clashes with stone-throwing protesters, witnesses said.

They said police were checking the identity card of a West Bank Palestinian near the Damascus Gate entrance to the Old City when a policeman shot him with a rubber bullet at point-blank range.

Arabs say no joint exercises

(Continued from page 1)

and some of the countries taking part would send naval officers rather than ships.

Kuwait's Defence Minister Ahmad Al Hamud Al Sabah also said the report was "completely baseless."

Despite the Arab denials, Israel stood by its Sunday announcement that it had agreed at a December meeting of one of several multilateral committees set up as part of the Middle East peace process to hold the exercise off the Tunisian coast.

"We can confirm that this will happen in the future," one defence ministry official told Reuters on Monday.

Daily shootings claim 1,000 lives in Karachi

By Zahid Hussain
The Associated Press

KARACHI — The gunmen of Karachi usually strike at night.

Sometimes it's a sniper who fires from a rooftop at pedestrians. Often it's a man on a motorcycle who blasts away on a busy street and then speeds off into the darkness. Lately, the attackers have grown so bold as to enter mosques and fire on men kneeling in prayer.

Political religious and ethnic feuds have all been factors in the almost daily shootings that have left more than 1,000 people dead over the past year in Karachi, a massive port city of at least 10 million people.

The local government is too weak and poorly run to pick up garbage or hand out parking tickets, much less catch the well-armed gunmen. Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto has pledged to clean up the chaos, but there is a strong sense that Karachi, Pakistan's business capital, has spun out of control.

"People have never felt so unsafe and helpless," said Sarfraz Ahmad, a resident of the Karachi Central District, the area hardest hit by the violence. "We never know when anyone will become the target of a terrorist attack."

Karachi's problems offer an extreme example of woes that plague the country as a whole: Political instability, drug trafficking, plentiful guns and persistent violence.

Ms. Bhutto has been only partially successful in reversing the country's image with such acts as last week's arrest and extradition to the United States of Ramzi Yousef, an Iraqi charged with organising the 1993 World Trade Centre bombing in New York.

In fact, the kind of turbulence that continues in many parts of Pakistan enables terrorists to operate more freely.

ly, despite the government's commitment to tracking them down.

Much of the Karachi fighting pits the security forces against supporters of the Mohajir Qaumi Movement (MQM), which has used violence, strikes and other confrontational tactics to paralyse the city.

The MQM represents the Mohajirs, or Muslims who migrated to Pakistan from India when the Asian subcontinent was divided into two nations in 1947.

The Mohajirs account for a majority of Karachi's population but say Ms. Bhutto and previous leaders have short-changed them when it comes to jobs, education and political clout. Periodic talks between the government and the MQM have failed to settle the dispute.

The MQM wants local elections, which they would almost certainly win. Ms. Bhutto, however, does not want to risk losing political control of the country's largest city, and she has relied on municipal leaders that she appointed.

To further complicate the matter, the MQM has split into two factions that often fight one another when they aren't battling the police. And in the past year, militant Sunni and Shiite Muslim groups have started attacking one another. Criminal gangs also run rampant.

In attacks Monday evening and early Tuesday morning, 19 people were killed. Most of the deaths appeared to be linked to the political violence.

Among the deaths were five people gunned down just outside the office of the Mohajir Qaumi Movement. Another five bodies were found in a car in the Orangi District in western Karachi. All the victims in the car were believed to be supporters of Ms. Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party.

The latest killings have come during the Muslim holy

month of Ramadan, when the city normally slows down and men spend hours talking with friends.

But many streets now empty when the sun goes down and attendance at some mosques has dropped off due to the violence.

In one of the worst attacks, gunmen with automatic rifles fired on men attending evening prayers on Feb. 5 at the Babul Islam Mosque, leaving nine dead and more than a dozen wounded.

"Seven bullets passed over my head. I saw several people in pools of blood," said Sohail Ahmad, 39. "Police arrived when it was all over. The people were very angry and pealed the police with stones."

There is widespread frustration with both the government and the police. The government has been unable to provide basic services such as water and electricity, which frequently break down.

The police rarely catch killers and seem unable to protect even themselves. More than 100 police have been killed in the city since the beginning of 1994.

"Every third man in Karachi is armed," said Abdul Sattar Sheikh, senior superintendent of police for the Karachi Central District. "We are not equipped to counter organised terrorism," he conceded.

The army patrolled the streets for more than two years, but Ms. Bhutto withdrew the force at the end of November and said police could maintain order. However, the violence immediately worsened and more than 200 people have been killed in the past two months.

The unrest has scared off potential foreign investors at a time when they are pouring vast sums of money into Asia's fast growing cities.

"We are heading toward a disaster," said Yaqub Karim, a leading industrialist.

Saudi budget deficit slashed to 3.3 per cent of GDP study

ABU DHABI (AFP) — Saudi Arabia has slashed its projected 1995 budget deficit to around 3.3 per cent of its gross domestic product (GDP) pressing ahead with reforms to offset losses from low crude prices, a Saudi bank study said Tuesday.

But the cut in spending, which followed unprecedented advice by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has cost it in terms of economic growth, according to the study by Henry Azzam, chief economist at the National Commercial Bank (NCB), the biggest bank in Saudi Arabia.

Mr. Azzam said the 1995 deficit was more than halved to 15 billion riyals (\$4 billion) from 40 billion riyals (\$10.6 billion) in 1994.

This came after expenditure was trimmed by 6.2 per cent to 150 billion riyals (\$40 billion) from 160 billion riyals (\$42.6 billion).

"It is projected that the deficit in 1995 accounted for 3.3 per cent compared with 8.8 per cent in 1994," he said in the study, published in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) newspaper Al Khaleej.

Saudi Arabia, which controls more than a quarter of the world's proven oil reserves, has been under pressure from the IMF to lower its deficit after it soared to serious levels after a drop in crude prices and large cash contributions to the 1991 Gulf war.

The deficit began to appear in the mid-1980s because of the lower oil prices and production and jumped to a record \$33.6 billion in 1991 due in payments for the liberation of Kuwait from Iraqi invasion forces. It accounted for as high as 28.5 per cent of the 1991 GDP but eased in the following years.

The deficit has forced the kingdom to borrow from the local and foreign markets and withdraw from its overseas reserves, believed to have declined to less than half their level in the mid-1980s.

Mr. Azzam expected Saudi Arabia to earn less from oil exports this year due to lower prices but said the fall would be offset by a hike in prices of petroleum products, internal flights and telephone, water and electricity rates.

He projected earnings from petroleum products to reach eight billion riyals (\$2.13 billion), raising total oil sales to around \$24.8 billion. The remaining revenue would come from non-oil sources, he added.

"This deficit could be financed through local sources without any impact on credits to the private sector as there are no plans to borrow from abroad," he said. "Previous borrowing has not affected bank liquidity as credits extended by banks to the government have not exceeded 25 per cent of their assets."

Mr. Azzam said the reduction in the 1995 budget, the second in two years, mainly affected defence, subsidies, debt repayment and projects. Defence expenditure, which received the lion's share of the budget, was cut by 7.5 per cent to 49.5 billion riyals (\$13.2 billion) while allocations for subsidies and debt repayments were slashed by 29.9 per cent to 35.2 billion riyals (\$9.38 billion).

The remaining sectors got around 5.2 billion riyals (\$1.38 billion), a decline of nearly 11.8 per cent.

Mr. Azzam forecast a decline in the 1995 GDP to 446.4 billion riyals (\$119.19 billion) from 453.2 billion riyals (\$120.8 billion).

"The decline came after several years of growth caused by a surge in the private sector, which is relying less on government spending as the country is pressing on with restructuring the economy," he said.

Report: Arabs lost \$12b in U.S. investment

ABU DHABI (AFP) — Arab states lost nearly \$12 billion in their investments in the United States last year because of a decline in stocks and the dollar, a United Arab Emirates (UAE) official said.

Said Al Jarwan, director of the Sharjah chamber of commerce and industry, said Arab investors had around \$90 billion in U.S. equities and stocks, or nearly 13.4 per cent of their total investment in the United States.

"Economic experts estimate the Arab investment losses in the U.S. financial markets at around \$12 billion by the end of 1994 due to a decline in stocks, bonds and the dollar rate," he said Tuesday in Al Khaleej newspaper.

The decline was caused by Washington's decision to raise interest rates on short term deposits six times to 5.5 per cent from 3.5 per cent, he said.

Mr. Jarwan gave no figures for the total Arab investment in the United States but official figures show the U.S.-based assets of Saudi Arabia and its five partners in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) exceed \$400 billion.

They account for nearly half the estimated overseas Arab funds of more than \$800 billion, invested mostly in the West in equities, real estate and bank deposits. Personal deposits are put at more than \$100 billion.

Mr. Jarwan was commenting on the low inter-Arab investment, which is estimated by the Arab Corporation for Guaranteeing Investment at around \$12.2 billion, a fraction of their overseas assets.

"There should be a joint Arab action to repatriate the huge overseas Arab funds, which are exploited by non-Arab capitals. They could be used to develop regional economies and serve domestic development," he said.

"Those funds face the risk of being nationalised or frozen, which has become possible at any time when there is a rift between us and the countries where we have deposits. This has happened more than once."

German central bank says moderate raises condition for smooth growth

FRANKFURT (AFP) — Germany should be able to continue recording smooth growth, the Bundesbank said, observing that costs remain high in Germany and that the upward movement of the mark was an additional challenge for businesses.

The central bank said the jobs shake-out had bottomed out, with seasonally-corrected figures showing a fall of 56,000 between the end of May 1994 and the end of January, to 2.53 million out of work in west Germany.

But despite the recovery, unemployment remained the dominant problem, characterised as in other European countries more by structural factors than a lack of demand, the report said.

"Moderate salary increases and an improved economic framework can help increase employment chances in a favourable economic situation," the bank said.

According to Bundesbank figures published last Thursday, gross domestic product (GDP) increased one per cent during the last quarter of 1994 and by 3.5 per cent compared to the same period in 1993.

The bank said that the German recovery was following a "classic pattern": First an increase in foreign demand, followed later by an

increase in investment demand by firms thanks to their increased profits.

Private consumption remains weak (it fell by one per cent during the last quarter of 1994), the bank said, and one could not expect a big rise for the time being due to the income tax increase for 1995, although it should take off later due to a fall in unemployment.

The Bundesbank also said in its monthly report for February that the German public deficit amounted to 100 billion marks in 1994, 2.5 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP).

In 1994, Germany thus respected the Maastricht treaty convergence criterion for the third phase of Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) regarding the public deficit, allowing a maximum three per cent of GDP.

The public debt was around 50 per cent of GDP, also below the 60 per cent ratio required by Maastricht.

According to the bank, both criteria are expected to be met by Germany in 1995.

Within the European Union, Germany is in a comparatively favourable position, according to the report, but the Bundesbank said it "must go further" than the Maastricht criteria in reducing its

public deficit, stressing that spending cuts are "an absolute priority."

The public deficit includes the federal budget, the regional states, municipalities and the social security system (the latter was in profit for 1994, the bank said earlier).

The federal, regional and municipal deficit totalled 105 billion marks, down by 30 billion marks compared to 1993, the Bundesbank said. It attributed the fall in particular to lower spending on employment support, which was less than expected because of a surprisingly strong recovery.

The federal deficit was 50.5 billion marks in 1994, against 69.5 billion in 1993. After payment to the government of the Bundesbank's profit, it comes to only 39.5 billion marks.

The regional states of west Germany are expected to show a 1994 deficit of 27 billion marks, against 25.5 billion in 1993, while for the eastern states the deficit was hardly changed at 16 billion marks.

The western municipalities showed a deficit of seven billion marks against nine billion in 1993, while those in the east showed a slightly increased deficit from five billion marks the previous year.

Iran vows crackdown on black market profiteers

TEHRAN (Agencies) — Iran, faced with a falling currency and steep consumer price rises, said Monday it would intensify the fight against black market money dealers and profiteers.

The government has proposed legislation that would allow courts to deal with cases involving foreign exchange, gold and silver, and other goods, Abrar said.

He said the government is fighting black marketeers, including over the past few months set up in the country with profiteers, have been arrested up, Tehran said.

The government has come a week after the dollar rose more than 10 per cent to a new high of 4,400 against the Iranian currency, which had lost about a third of its value in 1995.

Illegal sidewalk money dealers, driven underground by a crackdown in October, have reappeared. Rates on the flourishing black market are regularly quoted by newspaper and even the official IRNA news agency.

"The black market dealers are dealing unperturbed in clear view of police," the daily Jomhuri Eslami said last week, complaining about police laxness.

Despite the tough talk about crackdowns against profiteers, prices have gone up across the board, newspaper said.

"Today there is not one item that has no gone up in price since the beginning of (the price-control campaign in October)," Salam daily said Monday.

Official statistics put the annual rate of inflation at about 35 per cent in the Iranian year ending on March 21, he said.

The average wage of an Iranian worker is about 200,000 riyals (less than \$50) a month.

20. Newspaper reports place that figures closer to 50 per cent.

Recent press reports say car prices have risen more than 30 per cent and household appliances up to 100 per cent in the past few months.

Meanwhile, Iran's state labour union plans to demand a 50 per cent wage raise for workers to cope with economic hardship, a newspaper has reported.

Union leader Alireza Mahjub told Eteellaat newspaper that the hike was needed because "the rising rates of dollar and gold in Iran are having a direct impact on prices."

The increase should go into effect from the start of the Iranian new year on March 21, he said.

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Mr. Jarwan was commenting on the low inter-Arab investment, which is estimated by the Arab Corporation for Guaranteeing Investment at around \$12.2 billion, a fraction of their overseas assets.

"There should be a joint Arab action to repatriate the huge overseas Arab funds, which are exploited by non-Arab capitals. They could be used to develop regional economies and serve domestic development," he said.

"Those funds face the risk of being nationalised or frozen, which has become possible at any time when there is a rift between us and the countries where we have deposits. This has happened more than once."

U.S., Mexico agree on rescue package

WASHINGTON (AP) — After five intense days of negotiations, the United States and Mexico have agreed on terms for a \$20 billion rescue package for the Mexican economy, officials said Tuesday.

The agreement met U.S. demands that Mexico pledge to make fundamental reforms of its economy — reforms that are likely to cause economic pain in the form of rising interest rates and possibly a recession.

However, U.S. officials said without the reforms, investor confidence cannot be restored and the value of the Mexican peso will continue to plummet.

Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin and Mexican Finance Minister Guillermo were scheduled to sign the agreement in treasury's ornate cash room later Tuesday and officials said exact details of the terms would be spelled out then.

However, in advance of the ceremony, an administration official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said, "all of our concerns were taken care of."

Presidential Press Secretary Mike McCurry said, "we are satisfied that the government of Mexico and the United States have made excellent progress in the discussions over the weekend."

The announcement that an

agreement had been reached came one day after Mexico's central bank announced that it was tightening credit in a move that pushed short-term interest rates in the country up to almost 50 per cent.

Officials of the Bank of Mexico were quoted as saying that their action was taken as a result of the negotiations with the United States.

One key U.S. demand has been for Mexican authorities to tighten monetary policy as a way of supporting the peso by pushing interest rates higher.

The announcement that the Mexican central bank was tightening credit conditions helped to bolster the peso, which closed Monday at 5.53 to the dollar, up from 5.725 on Friday. Higher interest rates generally make a currency stronger by providing foreigners a greater return on their investments.

"The United States and Mexican officials have been making progress toward finalising the economic support package," Mr. McCurry said Monday, the fifth day of the discussions.

President Clinton last month offered Mexico the \$20 billion in U.S. loans after a bigger \$40 billion loan guarantee package ran into stiff congressional opposition.

The \$20 billion in loans are

being obtained through a treasury fund normally used to support the dollar. While congressional critics have charged Mr. Clinton with overstepping his authority to tap into this fund, an effort to challenge the president was defeated by the full House

two weeks ago.

In addition to tighter monetary policy, Mr. Rubin has told congressional committees he will demand ironclad guarantees that the United States will receive oil revenues from Mexico if Mexico defaults.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 22, 1995

By Thomas S. Plerson, Astrologer, Carroll Righter Foundation

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Contact an influential person who can give you support for the fine project that you have in mind. Take time for some fun later this afternoon and add to your happiness.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Your ideas are working like magic early in the day so be more aggressive than in the past. Relax at home tonight and you'll feel better tomorrow.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Make sure you carry through with promises to others and gain good will. Your mate becomes more affectionate as the day passes.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Take time to learn what is expected of you by associates and try to please them for possible advancement in your career.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Get busy at work ahead of you and gain fine benefits by being cooperative with others. Good organisational work is the key to success now.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) A time to concentrate on getting ahead in your line of endeavour. Know what will please your mate the most, whatever the cost.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) A good day to confer with family members and maintain harmony in the home. Sidelapse one who is a motherer and you will not offend anyone's feelings.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Good day after the information you need for a personal project. This day is also fine for communicating with others.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) You are thinking in a most practical vein and can easily handle a difficult problem today. Express your happiness over your relationship with a loved one.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) The morning may be depressing, but later you can go after your personal goals and gain them. Be careful of your money or else there won't be any if you spend it foolishly.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Forget the frivolous for now and get on practical matters that could bring you income for the future when times are lean.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) A good friend who is wise can tell you how to solve certain problems this morning so listen carefully. Relax and be contented in the evening.

Birthstone of February: Amethyst — Onyx

Trade deficit jumps an alarming 79%

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The trade deficit in the first six months of the current year has jumped an alarming 79.7 per cent with the chance of any major change in the short term.

The six months review (January to mid-January) showed the trade deficit stood at 20.4 billion rupees (\$408 million) up 79.7 per cent.

Exports to overseas markets dropped 21.1 per cent to \$171.8 million.

Although exports to India jumped 36 per cent to \$32.2 million, this was offset by the increase in imports from the same country — \$190.4 million worth against \$156 million in the first six months of the previous year.

With India the imbalance has been fuelled by the current Indo-Nepal Trade Transit Treaties signed by the former Nepali Congress (N.C.) government in 1992 which say that only Nepalese goods containing 50 per cent indigenous raw materials will be allowed into India.

There are no restrictions on India goods into Nepal, and economists said that unless this one-sided situation changed Nepalese industries would have little chance of expanding.

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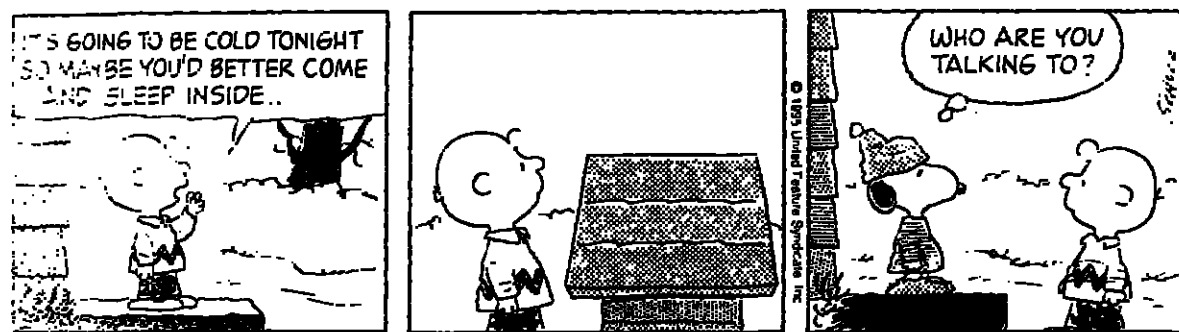
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Peanuts



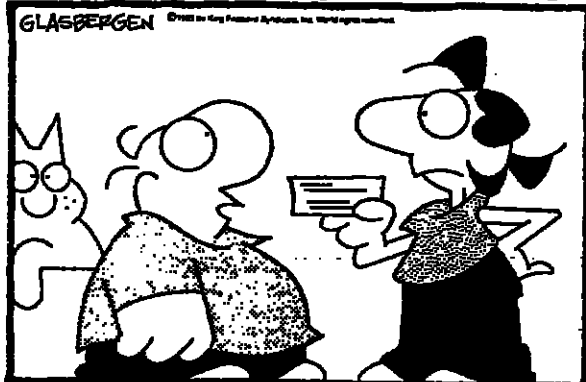
Andy Capp



Jeff

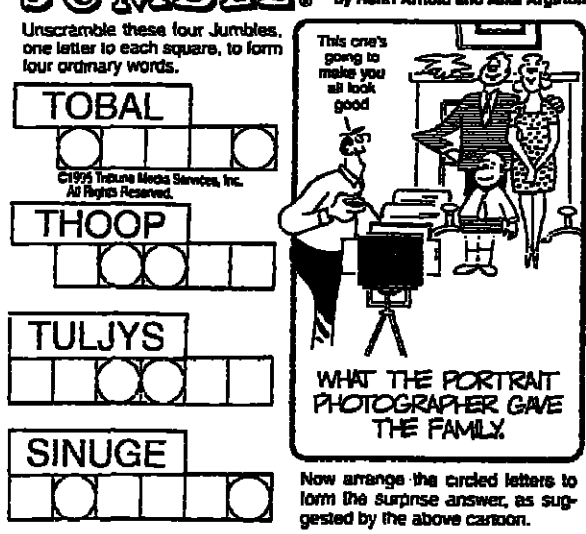


THE BETTER HALF. By Glasbergen



"I joined the Hubby Network. From now on, all of my arguments will be fought by trained professionals!"

JUMBLE THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME



THE Daily Crossword by Bernice Gordon



moderate growth

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business daily boat

A review of economic news from the Arab press

Major firm outlines big projects for Palestine

★ The Palestinian Company for Development and Investment (PCDI) has received preliminary approval from the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) to begin the procedures for founding a Palestinian stock exchange.

At present, both sides are cooperating in laying down the necessary legislation especially with regard to registering brokers and other managerial, legal and technical aspects.

PCDI Chairman Kamal Al Shaer said the company was in contact with the management of the Amman Financial Market (AFM) and the concerned authorities in Jordan to list Palestinian stock on the AFM and the Jordanian stock exchange, when it is established.

Dr. Shaer emphasised the importance of having a secondary market in Palestine. It is a basic condition to mobilise capital and provide opportunities to put the Palestinian economy in motion, he said.

Dr. Shaer said the Palestinian Company for Industrial Investment (PCII), which was set up by the holding company PCDI, would have its operations cover all of the West Bank and Gaza. The PCII's first project will be planning and designing industrial cities on lands to be assigned to it by the PNA to encourage setting up industries in areas having the necessary facilities.

The PCII general assembly is expected to hold a meeting soon. PCDI had recently established two companies: Al Quds Company for Tourism and Investment is headed by Khalil Al Talhoumi and is based in Jerusalem; and the other is for Real Estate Investment headed by Nabil Al Sarraf and based in Gaza.

According to Dr. Shaer, the PCII activities are two-pronged. First, the activities that the private sector undertakes and, second, the services that are usually carried out by the public sector in some countries such as electric power and communications among others.

Dr. Shaer revealed that during discussions with the PNA, the company made a comprehensive offer to build a 160-megawatt electric power station in Gaza and was given the green light to prepare the technical, economic and financial studies needed for the project.

As such, PCDI is now in the process of setting up a Palestinian public shareholding company to build, manage and operate the electric power project in which the Jordan Electric Power Co. and the International Finance Corporation have agreed to invest in its equity.

The PCDI chairman expects to submit to the PNA a detailed offer before the end of April 1995 at an estimated cost of \$140 million.

Dr. Shaer said PCDI was preparing offers to build the necessary facilities for the Gaza port such as a free zone, a industrial zone, warehouses and storage areas, management premises and maintenance workshops.

Asian crude oil prices highest in the world

SINGAPORE (Agencies) — Asian crude oil prices are the highest in the world, pulling up prices for some Middle East and African oil with them and squeezing Far East refining profits.

Malaysian Tapis crude oil, highly prized in booming Asia for its rich yield of transportation fuel, is being offered as high as \$19.30 per barrel for April loading, its strongest level since early August last year, oil traders said Tuesday.

The price of Indonesian Minas crude is being offered even higher at \$19.30 a barrel as Japan and China vie for scarce supplies. Minas is mainly burned by electric utilities but can also be refined.

In comparison, April North Sea Brent crude is fetching \$17.00 and U.S. West Texas Intermediate crude about \$18.60.

"Definitely Asian crude oil has become the costliest in the world and it is beginning to have a major impact on world oil markets," a trader

with a major oil company in Singapore said. "Refiners are losing money running Asian barrels and are looking to cheaper Mideast and African grades as replacements."

Refiners in Asia would lose 25 to 50 cents per barrel if they bought Tapis crude at current prices, sources estimated.

Crude from New Guinea, Australia and Indonesia used to be in ample supply if Tapis grew tight, sometimes at big discounts.

But less Asian crude is available now. Malaysia is running a new refinery flat out and production from Australia's Gippsland field is down by about 20 per cent in the last 18 months.

Moreover, weather-related problems at Indonesia's Belida and Australia's Griffin oilfields this month have resulted in the loss of another 1.6 million barrels, traders said.

Indonesia has also diverted Heavy Minas and Duri crude to a new refinery. Japanese

buyers, perhaps fearing another hot dry summer, have been vying with China for the remaining supplies, driving Minas premiums to a dollar over the official price.

Many Asian refiners have already turned to cheaper sources from outside the region to fill the supply gap.

Record amounts of African oil, conservatively estimated at 35 million barrels, have sold into Asia in 1995, mainly for Korea but also to Japan, China, Thailand, Taiwan and Indonesia.

U.S. and European refiners have frequently found themselves in tough bidding wars with Asian refiners, pushing African oil prices higher. Angola's Cabinda crude, for example, is being discussed at dated Brent minus 50 cents compared with dated Brent minus one dollar at times last year.

Some refiners are also turning to low sulphur Mideast crudes like Yemen's Masila as alternative.

Taking advantage of strong

demand and rising prices, Yemen this week raised its second quarter term Masila price to dated Brent minus 25 cents from minus 65 cents in the first quarter.

Buyers hope the squeeze will end soon as North Asian refiners begin seasonal maintenance shutdowns.

"This rally has got to end soon," one refiner said. He noted that Tapis prices typically begin falling around March as refiners close down units for turnarounds and kerosene demand drops as the northern hemisphere's winter ends.

A recent Reuters survey, however, found Japanese shutdowns will not peak until June and July. South Korean refinery shutdowns will run from May until July.

"Refinery turnarounds will be key to the price outlook for light low sulphur crude in the next few weeks," one Asian trader said. "Chinese demand will be more important for heavy sweet (Indone-

Jordan, France negotiating terms of \$100 million debt-equity swap

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Jordan and France are negotiating the discount rate for about \$100 million in Jordan's debts that the Paris government has agreed to convert into investments in the Kingdom, officials said Tuesday.

The officials, who did not want to be identified, said the negotiations were launched after the two governments signed an agreement late last year under which about \$200 million of Jordan's debts to France were also rescheduled.

The debt rescheduling accord was part of an agreement that Jordan reached with the Paris Club of creditor governments in June. The broad accord covered \$1.215 billion of Jordan's debts.

France holds about \$1 billion of Jordan's total foreign debts, which outgoing finance minister Sami Gamrah put at \$5.5 billion in early January.

About one-third of Jordan's dues to France is outstanding lease payments on Royal Jordanian aircraft and does not qualify for any special treatment. Of the rest, about \$350 million have been rescheduled, including the amount covered in last year's accord.

Under the accord on debt conversion, investors would be able to buy capital to be invested in Jordan in Jordanian dinars against payment of foreign currency outside

the country at a discounted rate.

According to the officials, Jordanian debt are now available in the market with about 33 per cent discount and the negotiations with the Central Bank of Jordan aimed at setting at a slightly higher discount for debt-equity swap.

As rule, when a country brings down its foreign indebtedness, the discount available on such debts in the secondary market also goes down parallel to the rise in the country's international credit rating.

In the early 90s, the discount available on Jordanian debts was as high as 50 and 55 per cent.

Jordan brought down its foreign debts from \$8.2 billion in 1989 to around \$6 billion in 1995 through debt buybacks and write-offs as well as cancellation of signed but non-disbursed loans after implementing a tough economic restructuring programme in coordination with the International Monetary Fund.

Nearly half of the Jordanian debts has been rescheduled for periods extending to more than 25 years.

The U.S., British and several European governments wrote off part of the Kingdom's obligations following the signing of the Jordan-Israel peace treaty on Oct. 26.

Foreign Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti said early this week that the Clinton administration had promised to bring forward the write-off of \$488 million of Jordan's debts to fiscal 1994-95 instead of 1995-96.

That would debts, total American write off of Jordan's debts in fiscal 1993-94 and 1994-95 to \$708 million.

Jordan owes the U.S. an addition \$300 million but that amount is not eligible for write-off under American laws.

Other major creditors of Jordan include Japan and Germany.

Jordan is lobbying its creditors for further debt relief to bring down its debt to around \$3 billion — around 75 per cent of its gross domestic product — a level seen essential for the Kingdom to regain pre-1988 international creditworthiness.

Financial Markets			
U.S. Dollar in International Markets			
Currency	New York Close	Tel Aviv Close	21/2/1995
Sterling Pound	1.5785	1.5811	**
Deutsche Mark	1.4880	1.4850	
Swiss Franc	1.2500	1.2505	**
French Franc	5.1360	5.1458	**
Japanese Yen	97.31	97.31	
European Currency Unit	1.2678	1.2699	**

Eurocurrency Interest Rates			
Currency	1 MTH	3 MTH	6 MTH
U.S. Dollar	5.87	6.08	6.25
Sterling Pound	6.37	6.50	6.87
Deutsche Mark	4.75	4.81	5.00
Swiss Franc	5.31	5.56	6.81
French Franc	5.31	5.67	6.00
Japanese Yen	2.08	2.08	2.12
European Currency Unit	5.78	6.00	6.31

Precious Metals			
Metal	USD/Oz	JD/Gm	Metal
Gold	379.05	7.50	Silver
			4.72

Central Bank of Jordan Exchange Rate Bulletin			
Currency	Bid	Offer	
U.S. Dollar	0.6960	0.6982	
Sterling Pound	0.041675	0.042160	
Deutsche Mark	0.1852	0.1869	
Swiss Franc	0.3290	0.3362	
French Franc	0.1398	0.1355	
Japanese Yen	0.7131	0.7165	
Dutch Guilder	0.4179	0.4209	
Swedish Krona	0.0434	0.0436	
Italian Lira	0.0434	0.0436	
Belgian Franc	0.0434	0.0436	

Other Currencies			
Currency	Bid	Offer	
Bahraini Dinar	1.8300	1.8476	
Lebanese Lira	0.041875	0.042860	
Saudi Riyal	0.1852	0.1869	
Kuwaiti Dinar	2.3200	2.3500	
Qatari Riyal	0.1903	0.1922	
Qatari Pound	0.1900	0.2150	
Omani Riyal	1.7860	1.8170	
UAE Dirham	0.1888	0.1905	
Crude Drachma	0.2765	0.3125	
Cypriot Pound	1.4440	1.5372	

LONDON EXCHANGE RATES

LONDON (R) — Following are the buying and selling rates for leading world currencies and gold against the dollar at mid-session on the London Foreign Exchange and bullion markets Tuesday.

U.S. \$1.00 costs	Canadian dollar
1.3994/04	Deutsche marks
1.4744/54	Dutch guilders
1.6532/42	Swiss francs
1.2464/74	Belgian francs
30.36/40	French francs
5.1363/13	Italian lire
1611.02/0	Japanese yen
97.20/30	Swedish crowns
7.3000/00	Norwegian crowns
6.4830/80	Danish crowns
5.8249/99	
\$1.5794/04	
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One ounce of gold	\$378.90/379.40

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NBA giants remain centre of attention

WASHINGTON (AP) — Rule changes cannot stop them. Opponents barely slow them. Even comparisons to past heroes cannot diminish their achievements.

They are the giants of the National Basketball Association (NBA), a group of centres who have dominated the league like no other tall men before them. Even after rule changes this year to emphasize guard play, these giants rule.

Nigerian-born Hakeem Olajuwon and Jamaican native Patrick Ewing sparked the trend. Shaquille O'Neal, David Robinson and Zaire's Dikembe Mutombo followed while Alonzo Mourning and Dutchman Rik Smits put clubs in title contention.

NBA officials, hearing complaints that centres were becoming too dominant, shortened the three-point line and tightened defensive rules to encourage play away from the basket. But pregame scoring has remained unchanged and centres remain the top scorers.

"There are just a lot of talented players out there in the middle," Robinson said. "It goes in cycles. This is our time."

The retirements of Michael Jordan and Magic Johnson ended an era for flashy guards and the big men have inherited the throne. None has been more impressive than Orlando's O'Neal, a dunking dynamo whose 29.5 points a game leads the NBA.

"He is having a sensational season," Robinson said. "Most people can't see the little ways in which his game has stepped up from last season."

The Magic are title contenders with O'Neal being supported by the rebounding of forward Horace Grant and the outside play of guard Anfernee Hardaway.

"You've got to say Shaq is the MVP," Hardaway said. "He's the leading scorer. We would not be the same team without him."

Many have compared Shaq and "Fenny" to the NBA's greatest 1980s tandem, Magic Johnson and centre Kareem Abdul-Jabbar. But the ex-Laker star and newest Hall of Fame inductee thinks Shaq has a way to go yet.

"Magic and I had already won national college titles before we even made it to the NBA. These guys haven't," Abdul-Jabbar said. "They have plenty of time. They will make their own statement."

Olajuwon already has. He was voted last season's Most Valuable Player after leading Houston to the NBA crown.

NBA leaders

NEW YORK (AP) — The NBA individual scoring, rebounding and assist leaders through Feb. 19:

SCORING			
	FG	FT	AVG
O'Neal, Orlando	587	300	29.5
Olajuwon, Houston	546	290	28.2
Robinson, S. Antonio	445	404	27.6
Malone, Utah	515	314	26.0
Jackson, Dallas	459	294	25.9
Mashburn, Dallas	419	262	24.4
Ewing, N.Y.	433	249	22.8
Richmond, Sacramento	390	212	22.5
Ceballos, LA Lakers	352	149	22.0
Scoville, G. State	336	126	21.7
Drexler, Por-Hou.	319	215	21.4
Pippen, Chicago	385	207	21.4
C. Robinson, Portland	386	191	21.4
Rider, Minnesota	380	197	21.1
Robinson, Milwaukee	391	217	20.9
Rice, Miami	375	171	20.7
Barros, Philadelphia	357	216	20.6
Hardaway, Orlando	373	227	20.6
Payton, Seattle	395	158	20.2
Mourning, Charlotte	331	276	20.0

REBOUNDING			
	OFF	DEF	AVG
Rodman, S.A.	168	313	16.2
Mutombo, Denver	204	452	13.2
Hill, Cleveland	196	334	11.5
Ewing, N.Y.	105	457	11.5
Olajuwon, Houston	115	427	11.1
Willis, Atl.-Mia.	145	329	11.0
Robinson, S.A.	127	381	10.8
O'Neal, Orlando	192	344	10.7
Jones, Dallas	190	294	10.5
Dudley, Portland	216	291	10.3
Malone, Utah	110	425	10.3

ASSISTS			
	NO	AVG	
Stockton, Utah	644	12.4	
Anderson, N.J.	449	10.2	
Bogues, Char.	470	9.4	
Hardaway, G.S.	448	9.1	
Strickland, Port.	332	8.7	
Van Exel, L.A.	394	8.4	
Richardson, Lac.	407	8.3	
Johnson, S.A.	390	8.1	
Blaylock, Atl.	385	7.5	
Kidd, Dall.	343	7.5	

Magic explode 152-104 over Bucks

CHARLOTTE (Agencies) — Shaquille O'Neal scored 30 points and Anfernee Hardaway added 25 as Orlando established the largest margin of victory in team history, thrashing the Milwaukee Bucks 152-104.

O'Neal scored 19 of his points in the first half as the Magic snapped a four-game road losing streak.

Orlando beat Philadelphia 129-83 last Friday for the previous record and was only three points shy of tying the team record for points in a game. The Magic beat the Utah Jazz 155-116 on December 30, 1990.

Todd Day and Glenn Robinson each had 22 points as the Bucks tied a club record for largest margin in a defeat that was set in a 144-96 loss to the Jazz on Jan. 27, 1990.

Lakers 108, Supersonics 105: At Tacoma, Washington, Nicky Van Exel scored a career-high 40 points, including seven 3-pointers, as Los Angeles beat Seattle for the fourth straight time this season.

Los Angeles led 100-93 before the Supersonics trimmed the deficit to 100-98 with 1:22 left.

However, Van Exel made three free throws in the final 1:59 seconds to stave off Seattle.

Detlef Schrempf led the Sonics with 26 points and Shawn Kemp had 25 points and 14 rebounds.

Vlade Divac added 19 points and eight assists for Los Angeles.

Warriors 98, 76ers 85: At Oakland, California, Tim Hardaway scored 21 points and Donyell Marshall had 14 in his Golden State debut.

Marshall, acquired Saturday from Minnesota for Tom Gugliotta, had eight of his points in the second quarter when the Warriors took the lead for good.

Dana Barros scored 26 points to lead Philadelphia, as Scott Williams had a career-high 20 rebounds to go with his 17 points.

Latrell Sprewell, with 17 points, was among six Warriors in double figures as New Golden State coach Bob Lanier got his second win since taking over for Don Nelson a week ago.

Hornets 115, Bulls 104: The Charlotte Hornets held Chicago to a franchise-low nine points in the third quarter and rallied from a 19-point deficit to beat the Bulls 115-104 on Monday night.

Scott Burrell, Hersey Hawkins and Larry Johnson scored 23 points each, and the Hornets established a team record for fewest points allowed in a quarter.

Chicago led 60-43 at half-time and built its lead in the third quarter. But the Bulls were 4-for-14 shooting in the quarter and committed 14 turnovers as they were outscored 35-9.

Charlotte closed the final five minutes of the third quarter with a 23-5 run, and Burrell's 3-pointer with 16.4 seconds left gave Charlotte a 78-69 lead. The Hornets hit 10 of 16 shots in the period and outrebounded the Bulls 15-3.

Heat 103, Cavaliers 96: At Cleveland, Glen Rice, the NBA's 3-point shooting champion, hit six 3-pointers and scored 36 points as Miami snapped a three-game losing streak.

Rice, who won the 3-point shooting championship during the NBA's all-star weekend, was 6-for-10 or 3-pointers and Miami was 9-for-15.

The Cavaliers did not make a two-point basket for the final 7:27 of the third quarter and first 9:15 of the fourth. Cleveland was 6-for-29 on two-point field goals in the second half.

Pistons 99, Kings 93: At Auburn Hills, Michigan, Joe Dumars completed a four-point play to break a late tie as Detroit broke a three-game losing streak.

The loss ended Sacramento's three-game winning streak and cost the Kings a chance to go nine games over .500 for the first time since April 15, 1983, when the franchise was still in Kansas City.

The Pistons won the eighth time in 10 home games.



No. 1 overall NBA draft pick Glenn Robinson of the Milwaukee Bucks #13 jams the ball over an opponent (AFP photo)

University Games

Japan and U.S. join the gold rush

JACA, Spain (AFP) — Japan and the United States joined the gold rush at the World Winter University Games but Russia's skiers managed to tighten their grip on the medals table.

Japan's ski jumpers dominated the 90m hill event at Astun, with Yukitaka Fukita winning the gold medal, Hiroki Vesugi the bronze and Noritaka Kasama taking fifth place.

But hours later, the Americans went one better with Michael Weiss and Damo Allen completing a one-two finish for the States in the men's figure skating at Sabinaigo.

The pair ousted China's Zhang Min, who had been leading after Sunday night's short programme but who had to settle for bronze.

The Japanese ski jumpers, who allowed Slovenia's Franci Petek to take the silver, showed the skills which have seen their nordic combined athletes take charge of the World Cup in recent years.

With a points total of 240, Fukita, who won the large hill event at the Zakopane Games two years ago, was comfortably clear of Petek (235.5), with Vesugi polling 226.5.

Weiss, who had been lying third behind Allen and Zhang after the short programme, gave a highly polished performance after both of his rivals had bungled landings on the free section.

"It was good and clean and I got things done that I had to do," said Weiss.

"I knew I was one of the best skaters here and I feel that I can compete with the best in the world. I hope I can go on to do as well if not better."

Allen, who also won the silver medal two years ago at

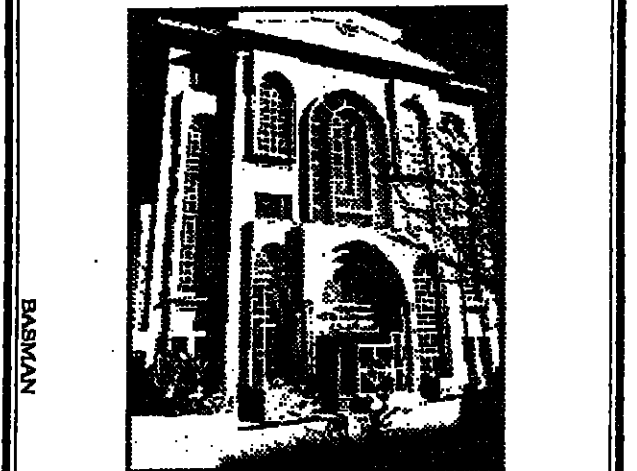
Zakopane put a brave face on his defeat.

"I didn't feel on top of things during the warm-up," he said, "so I'm happy with what I accomplished."

"It's nice to have held on to the same title, and second out of 23 is not bad." But he added: "I'll put it behind me and move on."

Anna Larionova gave Russia their second victory of the Games — after Sunday's one-two finish in the women's 10km cross country — winning a rare Alpine gold in the downhill at Formigal.

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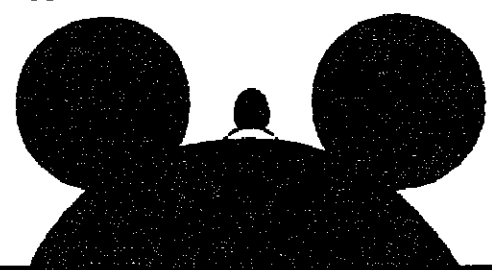
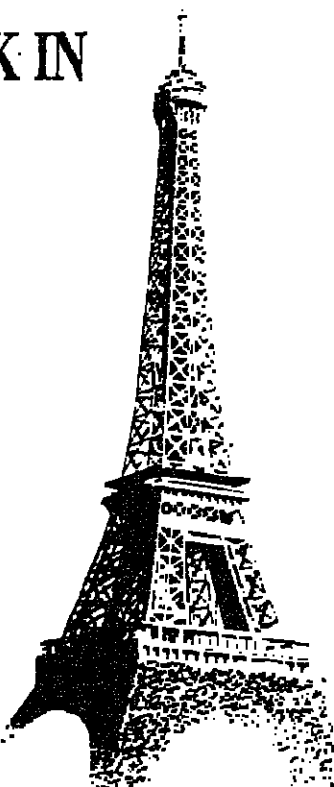
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Russians seize control of last road into Grozny

AL-KHAN-YURT, Russia (Agencies) — Russian forces Tuesday made their biggest advance in three weeks in Chechnya, seizing control of the last road leading into the capital Grozny.

The movement in effect cut off the last Chechen separatist fighters still holding positions in southern Grozny from their rear base.

Reporters at the scene saw a score of Russian tanks push forward to the village of Alkan-Yurt, seven kilometres southwest of Grozny, and take control of the Baku to Rostov-on-Don road, formerly held by Chechen rebels.

Earlier rebels were seen retreating in cars and four-wheel-drive vehicles.

Russian infantry troops also entered Alkan-Yurt where they exchanged automatic weapons fire with separatists holding the village, Chechen fighter Issa Khizhiev said.

At least four Russian tanks also took up positions two kilometres north of the village of Goidi, 10 kilometres south of Grozny, residents there said.

They said the tanks had surrounded a separatist position, which they were pounding with artillery fire.

The Russian moves will effectively give Moscow's troops control over all roads into the capital along a 15-kilometre span.

The Chechen separatist commander in charge of the Alkan-Yurt sector, Dok Makhayev, said the tank movements were "preparing a major Russian offensive in all directions later Tuesday night."

Further north, between Alkan-Yurt and Kirova, fierce fighting raged Tuesday with the Russian army seeking to cut off access to Grozny from the west.

The large-scale attacks ended a relative lull in the 10-week conflict which a human rights body said had

killed more than 24,000 civilians.

A report, prepared by experts working for Russian human rights commissioner Sergei Kovalyov, said the scale of civilian deaths was comparable only with Poland in World War II.

Warplanes bombed Chechen units in the localities of Gudermes, Argun and Samashki and Russian forces also struck at Chechen positions in the Promyslovsky district on Grozny's northwest rim on Tuesday, Itar-Tass news agency said.

The Chechens confirmed fresh clashes, saying Russian forces had launched an offensive with tanks, artillery and warplanes in areas south of the city at around 5 a.m. (0200 GMT).

Chechen Information Minister Movladi Udugov said military activity had died down by 11 a.m. (0800 GMT) after Russian forces failed to make a breakthrough in Chechen lines.

But he was also quoted by Interfax news agency as saying aerial attacks, some involving high-altitude bombing raids, were continuing in southern districts of the devastated capital as well as Argun, just to the east, at midday.

Mr. Udugov also said Chechen fighters had shot down a Sukhoi-25 fighter plane early on Tuesday between the southern districts of Chechen-aul and Stariye Atagi.

But Interfax news agency quoted an air force official as denying this.

Chechens shot down a Sukhoi-27 in the area on Feb. 4.

New military activity had been widely expected following pledges by Russian military officials to crush rebel resistance after the expiry of a four-day ceasefire on Sunday night.

Defence Minister Pavel Grachev has ruled out any more talks with rebels loyal to separatist leader Dzhokhar

(Continued on page 3)



Precariously perched boulders slowly but steadily sliding towards the main Amman-Jerash highway (Photo by Rana Hussein)

Huge rocks sliding towards main Amman-Jerash highway

By Rana Hussein
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A massive boulder is slowly sliding towards the main Amman-Jerash highway from the hillside adjoining the road and nothing could be done to stop the movement, officials said Tuesday.

The landslide started early Monday, causing rocks to fall on the road and hindering traffic for about two hours, police said.

The early morning avalanche involved about a 100-metre stretch of a hill side near the Salhoub area north of Baqa'a camp after a crack appeared in the rock structure, they said.

Minister of Public Works and Housing Abdul Razzaq Ensour estimated the boulder in motion at more than 750,000 cubic metres in volume and 1.5 million tonnes in weight.

"There is nothing that could stop it, and we are waiting to see what will happen after the mass stops moving," the minister told the Jordan Times.

He said the landslide stemmed from the weakness of clay which forms layers be-

tween rocks.

"When the water level in the clay increased, it led to imbalance between the layers, causing the stone layer to split and start sliding," Dr. Ensour said.

A team of experts was keeping a round-the-clock monitoring of the area. Two lanes of the highway were closed immediately after Tuesday morning's slide and the other two lanes were open late Tuesday.

Dr. Ensour said a landslide occurred in the same area while work was under way on the same highway in 1992.

"A visiting American team proposed solutions to solve the problem, but it required huge amounts of money and special equipment and we could not afford it," Dr. Ensour said.

The highway, which cost more than JD 40 million, was opened in March 1994 after seven years of work.

The project took so long to complete due to difficulties including landslides and financial constraints, officials said.

The highway shortened the distance from Amman to Irbid by 20 kilometres. The highway also bypassed the

Greco-Roman city of Jerash, avoiding the archaeological sites and residential districts.

According to Dr. Ensour, the 75-kilometre highway has a series of mountains and any part of the range "could crack any time because of the weak clay understructure."

"The area around Jerash is the most dangerous, he said. "There are 15 areas that could cause landslides at any time, including three most dangerous spots, and one of them was the area where the landslide occurred today," he said.

Dr. Ensour stressed that there was no real cause for alarm because landslides are a "known reality" and are expected. Most of the roads are under surveillance at all times by ministry workers, he said.

"This is a reality and we have to deal with it. Hopefully we will be able to control the situation and deal with every abnormal situation that is happening along the road," he said.

"We can predict by detection and special equipments if the mountain will stop but we can't tell when it will stop," the minister added.

Beirut seeks to end clashes in south

BEIRUT (Agencies) — Lebanese Foreign Minister Faris Bouez said on Tuesday he had started contacts with a number of countries to prevent worsening of the latest round of violence in South Lebanon.

But addressing parliament on the third day of clashes between guerrillas and Israeli forces, Mr. Bouez dampened the hopes of some members of parliament (MPs) that Lebanon would make a complaint against Israel to the U.N. Security Council.

"I am afraid that if we submit a complaint to the Security Council, the vote may not be in our favour," Mr. Bouez said.

Later, he told Reuters: "I am holding contacts with some countries over the situation in the south."

Mr. Bouez said he suggested to the cabinet the formation of a ministerial emergency committee to follow up flare-ups in South Lebanon.

"It was customary that we ask for American intervention whenever there is an (Israeli) aggression, but now we have to depend on ourselves because I fear that the American side may not interfere," Mr. Bouez said.

Guerrillas attacked three posts of the Israeli-backed South Lebanon Army (SLA) militia on Tuesday, wounding one militiaman, pro-Israeli militia sources said.

Security sources said Israeli gunners simultaneously pounded guerrilla-held areas north of the zone but no one was hurt.

Israeli planes and artillery have blasted guerrilla-held areas in the past two days, killing two civilians and a guerrilla on Sunday after pro-Iranian Hizbollah (Party of God) fighters killed an SLA militiaman.

One SLA militiaman was wounded when guerrillas opened up with mortars and rocket-propelled grenades on the outskirts of Aramta and Toumat Niha in mountains on the northeastern edge of the Israeli-occupied border enclave, sources said.

Shortly after the 10 a.m. (0800 GMT) attack, Israeli gunners blasted suspected guerrilla targets near the villages of Madoun and 'Ain Al Tineh in the lowlands south-east of Toumat Niha, the sources said. They requested anonymity.

'Ain Al Tineh is on the southern edge of the Bekaa Valley and close to where Israeli warplanes staged two air raids on Monday.

There was no word on casualties in Tuesday's bowitzer barrage, which reached a climax of 15 shells in 30 minutes.

Violence escalating since Sunday has threatened to further slow down the U.S.-sponsored Middle East peace process.

Rabin confirms contacts with Iran over airman

TEL AVIV (Agencies) — Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin said Tuesday that Iran and Germany had held secret talks for the release of Israeli fighter pilot Ron Arad but they failed.

"There were contacts between the Germans and the Iranians" over the fate of Arad, missing since his plane was shot down over Lebanon in 1986, Mr. Rabin told Israel Radio.

"But it produced nothing concrete about either where he is detained or his physical condition. We still believe he is alive and we still hold the Iranians responsible for his fate."

In Germany, the Frankfurter Allgemeine newspaper said negotiations had been going on for years and had now "entered the decisive stage."

Iran had provided Israel with a videotape showing Arad was alive and a letter from him, the daily said, quoting Bonn security officials.

Mr. Rabin's spokesman Oded Ben Ami had earlier totally denied the newspaper report (see page 2).

"We have no new elements. We have neither cassettes, nor letters, nor negotiations," he said.

"We know nothing about all the details in the German newspaper which is reputed

to be serious and credible but which did not contact us."

An Israeli security official said there was no firm proof that Arad, shot down over South Lebanon on Oct. 16, 1986, was still alive.

"For us the situation has not changed and we are waiting to get concrete proof to be sure that Ron Arad is in fact alive," the official said.

The Iranians handed over a "new sign of life" from Arad, a videotape, and Arad's wife, who is in Washington D.C., received a letter from Arad. Frankfurter Allgemeine said.

It did not say when the alleged videotape was made or when it was handed over. Mr. Rabin denied there was any new video or letter.

Dieter Vogel, spokesman for Chancellor Helmut Kohl, said he "won't deny there have been such contacts (with Iran). But I don't know of any details. The job of secret services is to be secret."

Zeev Schiff, military analyst for the Haaretz daily, said he was certain the Germans are holding talks with the Iranians and that "in these talks they bring up the issue of Ron Arad."

Mr. Schiff said the Germans apparently leaked the Arad talks to deflect U.S. criticism over their deepening economic ties with Iran and

(Continued on page 3)

Italy will not mediate peace among Somali factions

MOGADISHU (Agencies) — Italy's special envoy to Somalia said on Tuesday the former colonial power would no longer attempt to broker peace in the anarchic country as the last United Nations troops prepared to evacuate.

"Italy has made many attempts at reconciliation between the Somali factions... the situation is now at a loss," Giorgio Vecchi told reporters on the Italian aircraft carrier Garibaldi off Mogadishu's Indian Ocean coast.

"The Somalis must make peace themselves."

Italian ships and troops are taking part in the U.S.-led operation "United Shield" to pluck a rearguard of Pakistani U.N. troops from the beaches of Somalia's capital within days.

But Mr. Vecchi said he had no plans to make contact with any Somali faction leaders.

"Nobody knows what will happen in Somalia," he said. "Some say it will be the moment for the Somalis to make peace. There is also a belief that it will be the moment of doom."

The U.N. Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM) is leaving two years after thousands of U.S.-led foreign troops landed to sweep militias aside and get food to people in the interior who were dying of famine at the rate of 1,000 a day.

That part of the mission

went smoothly, but in 1993 UNOSOM quarrelled with the warlord who has loose control of the streets in South Mogadishu, Mohammed Farah Aided — and got bogged down in a feud with his militias.

Several Italian peacekeepers were gunned down in Mogadishu along with dozens of soldiers from other nations. Western forces pulled out last March and the Asian and African troops who were left as the U.N.'s caretakers are now following.

Italian marines due to help cover the withdrawal of U.N. troops are confident of securing the port and airport, their commander said.

Admiral Elio Bolongaro, second-in-command of the U.S.-led operation, refused to specify when the 500 Italian and 2,600 U.S. marines will hit the beaches from landing craft saying that was "a military secret."

The same response was given by a U.S. lieutenant-colonel who is spokesman for the 18-ship armada.

On Thursday, militiamen shot in the air at the gate to the airport — a demonstration of muscle-power — and Pakistani U.N. guards returned the fire, also in the air, as women and children hid the sand.

Guards at the seaport also fired in the air after hearing

(Continued on page 3)

COLUMN

U.K. policeman acquitted of raping colleague

LONDON (AFP) — A 25-year-old police constable was acquitted of raping a colleague following a New Year's Eve party after he told an eight-man, four-woman jury, "I know that when a woman says no she means no."

Michael Seear had been accused by a policewoman of luring her back to his room in the Surrey Police Headquarters bachelors' dormitory on the pretext of being too drunk to walk by himself after the party Jan. 1 last year.

The woman, also 25, whose identity as an alleged rape victim is protected by law, said that once they were in his room he locked the door and raped her. Mr. Seear, testifying during his six-day trial, termed the charge "sheer fabrication," saying the two engaged only in consensual, non-coital intimacies, as they had on previous nights, stopping when she said "no".

He said the woman had been romantically involved at the time with a friend of his, another policeman living in the same dormitory.

Unknown jumping dinosaur discovered

PARIS (AFP) — The remains of a previously unknown species of two-legged dinosaur which probably jumped a great deal has been unearthed in southeast France, archaeological officials said Monday.

The pelvis and back leg of the 100-million year old creature, which was probably about 1.5 metres (about six feet) tall, have been discovered near the town of Sisteron, half way between Grenoble and the south coast.

The National Museum of Natural History, which has christened the animal "Gaeussaurus sisteroniensis," said it belongs to a species which had been thought to have died out before the Jurassic era, 40 million years earlier.

The museum's Professor Philippe Taquet said the creature had strong legs and was probably a good jumper. "Its very prominent knees would have allowed it to make very big leaps, or at least given it very supple legs," he said.

Sweden mourns as baby rhino Nelson dies

STOCKHOLM (AFP) — His plight had touched a nation but no amount of kindness could save Nelson the sick rhino, who died Monday after suffering from a brain disease since birth.

Sweden is mourning as the director of Kolmarden Zoo, southwest of Stockholm, announced the death only hours after vets said the baby rhinoceros would have to be put down Tuesday because they could not treat a herpes-like virus affecting his brain.

The nation's media had published regular bulletins on his health since he was born prematurely on Feb. 11 and children pleaded for vets to save him. But Bengt Roeken, the vet treating Nelson — named after South African President Nelson Mandela — at the University Hospital in Uppsala, north of Stockholm, said earlier Monday: "You can't keep a two-tonne animal alive when it can't stand up straight."

Police recover remaining Jewish treasure

BUCHAREST, Romania (AP) — Police have recovered the final missing pieces of a \$200 million Jewish artifact collection stolen in Hungary in 1993. Thirty gold and silver pieces worth \$4.5 million were found late last week, police spokesman Lt. Col. Nicolae Budur said.

His statement gave no further details. On Sunday, Hungarian police and experts arrived in Bucharest to verify the find.

Col. Budur said the objects would probably be returned to Hungary next month. Last August, police discovered a trove of gold and silver religious relics, carpets and paintings in a village near the Romanian capital. The objects were stolen from the Budapest Jewish Museum December 1993.

(Continued on page 3)

Israeli allies threaten

MARIAYOUN (AP) — The command in South Lebanon Wednesday warned that the government continues to ignore the Israeli-occupied border area. The population of an Israeli-occupied border area has been 300,000. The Israeli army has been in the area since 1982. The Israeli army has been in the area since 1982. The Israeli army has been in the area since 1982.

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Jordan, Bahrain draft media accord

MANAMA (Petra) — A Jordanian delegation led by Information Minister Nayef Mola on Wednesday signed a draft executive programme with Dr. Halah Umran, the under secretary of the Bahraini Ministry of Information to launch cooperation in information-related fields.

The draft agreement would be endorsed by the governments of the two countries during a visit to Jordan next month by Bahrain's Information Minister Tareq Al Muayad at the invitation of his Jordanian counterpart Khaled Karaki.

The draft programme provides for the two countries to exchange radio and television messages, hold training programmes for personnel working for information services, coordinate in the use of satellites for radio and television broadcasts, exchange of radio and television news and other programmes, conduct joint programmes production work, coordinate work in publications and the work of the national news agencies and exchange publications and information booklets and media expertise.

The Jordanian delegation was later received by Sheikh Issa Ben Salman Al Khalifah, the emir of Bahrain, who voiced pride in the Jordanian-Bahraini ties.

Iran denies talks with Israel on Arad

NICOSIA (AP) — Iran Wednesday denied it had engaged in talks with Israel for the release of Ron Arad, an Israeli airman captured in Lebanon in 1986.

The Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung newspaper reported Tuesday that Israeli and Iranian negotiators have been meeting in separate rooms at the German chancellery in Bonn, with German mediators shuttling between them, to discuss Arad.

The official Islamic Republic News Agency quoted Foreign Ministry spokesman Mahmoud Mohammadi as saying Tuesday that no direct or indirect negotiations with Israel through Germany have taken place.

Iran blasts U.N. human rights report

NICOSIA (AP) — Iran alleged Wednesday that a recent U.N. report accusing it of human rights violations was "spiteful" and based on information from groups hostile to the Islamic republic.

Tehran Radio said in a commentary that the report repeated "earlier spiteful and contradictory claims" made by the United Nations.

In a report to the U.N. Human Rights Commission Monday, Salvadoran Jurist Reynaldo Galindo Pohl said Iran continued to rely heavily on executions, torture, repression and religious persecution to enforce obedience to its Islamic revolutionary ideals.

"This report has been prepared indirectly on the basis of groups hostile to the Islamic Republic of Iran," the radio said.

Arab League opens meeting on Somalia

CAIRO (AP) — The Arab League opened an international conference Wednesday on how to help Somalia after United Nations troops complete their withdrawal next month.

Participating in the two-day meeting are representatives of the United Nations, the Organisation of African Unity, the Non-Aligned Movement, the Organisation of Islamic Conference and some of the 22 League members of the Arab League.

Esam Abdul Meguid, the league's secretary-general, told the conference that all Arab League resolutions stress "the importance of supporting the Somali people and continuing peaceful attempts to end warring factions."

Dr. Abdul Meguid warned of a "dangerous bend" that the Somali crisis has reached (see page 12).

Yousef informant 'feared for life'

NEW YORK (AP) — The South African student who turned in a key World Trade Centre bombing suspect said the man ordered him to carry a bomb to the United States and threatened his life if he refused, a newspaper reported Tuesday.

The informant, Istiaque Parker, 25, is in hiding somewhere in the United States and has agreed to testify against suspect Ramzi Ahmad Yousef at his trial, the New York Times reported Tuesday.

Mr. Parker has told friends and family that he has not received any of the \$2 million reward money offered by the U.S. government for information leading to Mr. Yousef's arrest, the Times said.

The Times spoke to members of Mr. Parker's family in the Indian Muslim community near Cape Town and to a reporter for a monthly Muslim journal who had interviewed Mr. Parker twice by telephone.

Mr. Parker's account, the Times said, is that he met Mr. Yousef last May in Islamabad, Pakistan, where he was completing his religious studies at the Islamic University.

At first he did not know who Mr. Yousef was, Mr. Parker said. Mr. Yousef, the accused mastermind behind the Feb. 26, 1993, World Trade Centre bombing that killed six people and injured more than 1,000, was using a false name and had altered his appearance, he said.

But after several months, Mr. Parker said, Mr. Yousef trusted Mr. Parker with the secret of his identity and told the South African that he had blown up the trade centre.

Finally, Mr. Parker said, Mr. Yousef told Mr. Parker he had a mission for him: he was to carry a bomb from Pakistan to the United States.

"According to Mr. Parker's uncle, Sitar Parker, who spoke to the student last week, Mr. Parker 'wanted to get out of it,' but Mr. Yousef threatened him." He said: "You can't leave us now, you know too much."

NEWS IN BRIEF

Court frees suspected Jewish bomber

TEL AVIV (AFP) — An Israeli court freed on bail Tuesday a 22-year-old settler accused of preparing to bomb Muslims in Jerusalem. Police had requested that Doron Golding of the hardline Jewish settlement of Hebron remain in custody while inquiries go on. The court ordered his release but placed him under house arrest for several hours each day. Golding was arrested on Feb. 11 just before last week's first anniversary of the Hebron mosque massacre by Baruch Goldstein, who also lived in Kiryat Arba. Police said Golding was caught carrying two bottles of acid and ball bearings to be used to kill Arabs on the Haram Al Sharif complex in East Jerusalem. Golding, a former militant in the outlawed anti-Arab Kach movement, claimed the equipment was for cleaning out drains.

Ciller mourns her mother's death

ISTANBUL (AP) — Prime Minister Tansu Ciller remained confined to her mansion Tuesday to mourn the death of her mother, Muazzez Ciller, 86, died Monday. The cause of her death was not disclosed. The funeral was scheduled Wednesday.

Extremists kill Egyptian policeman

CAIRO (AP) — Suspected Muslim extremists killed a policeman on his way to work Tuesday. In another incident, three civilians were wounded, apparently when police fired by mistake. Sewerly Abdul Hamid Mohammed, 40, was killed instantly when he was shot near his house in Abu Quras, 220 kilometres south of Cairo, his attackers escaped. The shooting occurred in Minya province, where fighting between militants and the government has been fiercest. In another incident Monday in Minya, three civilians were wounded, two of them seriously. It was not clear who fired the shots, but one of the men told authorities he believed police fired by mistake, thinking the men were extremists.

Italy 'not responsible' for Lebanon waste

BEIRUT (R) — Italy said on Tuesday it was not responsible for an estimated 10,000 barrels of toxic waste which environmental watchdog Greenpeace says were dumped in Lebanon from Italy in the 1980s. Italian Ambassador Carlo Calia said Lebanon needed to prove first that the barrels existed and that they came from Italy before it agreed to take any back. "We will not take barrels that do not exist. We came here and took back all the barrels proven (to have come from Italy)," Mr. Calia told reporters in reference to 6,000 barrels sent back to Italy in 1988. Greenpeace said last month the 6,000 barrels were part of a shipment of 16,000 barrels of toxic waste sent to Lebanon in 1987-88 of which 10,000 were believed to have been dumped off the Lebanese coast or buried in the mountains.

Buthelezi suspends Inkatha role in parliament

CAPE TOWN (AP) — Zulu nationalist leader Mangosuthu Buthelezi stopped just short of pulling his Inkatha Freedom Party out of the government Tuesday, suspending its participation in parliament until his demands on autonomy were addressed. Mr. Buthelezi, who has repeatedly used brinkmanship to push his demands, said Inkatha ministers would continue serving in the multi-party cabinet led by President Nelson Mandela's African National Congress (ANC). But Inkatha legislators suspended "active participation" in South Africa's first multi-racial parliament, Mr. Buthelezi said, and would not contribute to its main task, writing a new constitution.

Military security officer shot dead in Algeria

PARIS (Agencies) — Suspected Islamic extremists killed a colonel in Algeria's military security service and two of his bodyguards in an ambush in the capital Algiers, sources close to French intelligence said Tuesday.

Colonel Djilali Meraoui, 56, known as Si Salah, died on Sunday when suspected Islamic extremists machine-gunned his car and an escorting vehicle in the Kouba district, a fundamentalist stronghold not far from the city centre.

Two of his bodyguards were also killed and the driver of Meraoui's car was badly wounded, the sources said.

Meraoui had been charged of affairs in the press service of the Defence Ministry.

The London-based Al Hayat newspaper said the colonel was an influential figure close to the boss of the military security, Mohammad Mediene, known as Tewfik.

The government daily Al Moudjahid published a death notice saying that Meraoui and the two others had died in an "odious terrorist attack."

Yemen opposition leader says Saudi talks a plot

SANAA (R) — A Yemeni opposition leader has described talks between Yemen and Saudi Arabia to solve their 60-year-old border dispute as a conspiracy.

Omar Al Gawi, leader of the Yemeni Unionist Party (YUP), told a news conference in Sanaa late Monday night that "what is going on in Saudi Arabia is not negotiations but a conspiracy."

Delegates from both sides have been discussing in the Saudi capital Riyadh for a month how to solve the border problem, with no sign so far of a major breakthrough on a memorandum of understanding.

Mr. Gawi said the Saudis want to divide the question of the demarcation of borders between Saudi Arabia and both former North and South Yemen "and it seems to me

this view has been accepted," by the Yemeni delegation.